

THE CROATIAN ASYLUM SYSTEM IN 2024

- NATIONAL REPORT -



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2024 AT A GLANCE

1. The *Act on Amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection* came into effect on 11 February 2025, enabling the extension of temporary protection beyond 4 March 2025 for another year or for as long as there is a need, to be decided by the Croatian Government on the basis of the decision of the Council of the European Union. In addition, the amendments foresee the adoption of a *Strategic Planning Act* for the asylum and migration management system (aligned with EU Regulations 2024/1351, on asylum and migration management, and 2024/1359, on crisis and force majeure) and extend the scope of solidarity measures in line with Article 56(2) of the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation.
2. In 2024, the Republic of Croatia experienced a 58% decrease in irregular border crossings compared to 2023. Furthermore, there was a 61% decline in the number of applicants for international protection, with 26,776 people expressing their intention to seek asylum. The Ombudswoman's report for 2024 also highlights a drop in the number of complaints filed regarding pushbacks, although NGOs continue to gather information on pushbacks.
3. Regarding the Dublin procedure, 89% more individuals were transferred to Croatia compared to 2023, while outgoing transfers increased by 50%.
4. In 2024, the Service for the Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection (SRA) issued 11% more decisions restricting freedom of movement compared to 2023. As in 2023, no alternatives to detention were utilised.
5. In 2024, 71 individuals were granted asylum (42% more than in 2023), of whom 19 were men (27%), 20 were boys (28%), 13 were women (18%), and 19 were girls (27%). Compared to 2023, when only two individuals were granted subsidiary protection, in 2024 this status was granted to nine people (three men, three boys, two women, and one girl), representing a 350% increase.
6. Administrative courts saw 265% more appeals against refugee status determination (RSD) decisions compared to the previous year.
7. In 2024, there was a 31% increase in the number of children expressing their intention to seek international protection compared to 2023. Out of 26,776 individuals who expressed the intention to seek international protection, 1,980 were unaccompanied or separated children (UASC), including 1,614 boys and 66 girls. This represents a 30% increase on 2023, when 1,516 asylum-seeking UASC were registered. However, only 19 submitted a full application for international protection in 2024.
8. The number of applications for temporary protection decreased by 25%, to 3,716 applications compared to 4,956 in 2024. The acceptance rate for applications submitted in 2024 was 91%, compared to 95% in 2023.

As of 31 December 2024, 103 displaced children from Ukraine remained under the protection of a guardian, according to the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, while data from the Ministry of Interior however, notes that 216 UASC with temporary protection resided in Croatia by the end of 2024.

As of 31 December 2024, 25,997 people who were granted temporary protection in the Republic of Croatia were actively registered as residing on the territory of Croatia, which represents an increase of 12% in comparison to 31 December 2023, when 23,081 had a registered address in Croatia.

9. Civil society and international organisations remain very active in support of the asylum system, implementing numerous activities aimed at improving the availability of services for individuals and their empowerment; expanding cooperation between organisations; raising public awareness and strengthening the capacities of key stakeholders.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Croatian Law Centre (CLC) has been actively engaged in the Croatian asylum system since 2003 as an implementing partner of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Croatia (UNHCR). The CLC systematically follows legislation and its implementation in practice in the field of asylum, on the basis of which its national reports on the asylum system have been prepared since 2010. All previous reports are available on the CLC website.¹

This Report is made within the Project 'Legal Assistance and Capacity Building on Access to Territory and Asylum in Croatia' implemented in 2024 and financed by UNHCR. It is based on publicly available data, and data provided to CLC by different public bodies, international organisations and civil society organisations, including data provided by Ministries to UNHCR.²

CLC is exclusively responsible for the content of this Report.

¹ Croatian Law Centre, <https://www.hpc.hr/?s=nacionalni>

² During the preparation of the Report, differences were noticed between some statistical data provided by official bodies and institutions.

2. WAR IN UKRAINE AND TEMPORARY PROTECTION FOR DISPLACED PERSONS

Following the Council's *Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2409 of 19 October 2023 extending temporary protection as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382*,³ the Croatian Government adopted the *Decision on the Extension of Temporary Protection in the Republic of Croatia for Displaced Persons from Ukraine* on 29 February 2024, extending this status to 4 March 2025.⁴ News about the automatic extension of temporary protection and an invitation to persons already granted temporary protection to extend the validity of their temporary protection ID cards were again published on the website *Croatia for Ukraine*.⁵ Along with the extension of temporary protection, the Government decided to enable the extension of lease contracts for residential units under the collective and subsidized housing programme until 4 March 2025 by amending the *Decision on Financing Costs for Housing Care of Displaced Persons from Ukraine in Individual Accommodation*, which previously foresaw this until 4 March 2024.⁶

Following the Council's *Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1836 of 25 June 2024 extending temporary protection as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382*,⁷ by which temporary protection is extended until 4 March 2026, on 19 December 2024 the Croatian Government launched an e-consultation on a Draft Proposal to amend the *Act on International and Temporary Protection (AITP)*.⁸ The Draft Proposal, inter alia, aimed to revise Article 79, which limited temporary protection to three years, preventing extensions beyond 4 March 2025. Referred to the urgent legislative procedure, the proposal was subsequently adopted in 2025.⁹

According to data of the Croatian Ministry of the Interior (Mol),¹⁰ 3,716 new applications for temporary protection were submitted between 1 January and 31 December 2024, out of which 1,152 were submitted by men (31%), 1,713 by women (46%) and 851 by children (23%). Out of this total number, in 2024, temporary protection was approved

³ Council of the EU, *Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2409 of 19 October 2023 extending temporary protection as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382*, OJ L, 2023/2409, 24 October 2023, available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2023/2409/oj

⁴ Croatian Government, *Decision on the Extension of Temporary Protection in the Republic of Croatia for Displaced Persons from Ukraine*, 29 February 2024, available at: <https://vlada.gov.hr/sjednice/289-sjednica-vlade-republike-hrvatske/42042>

⁵ Ministry of the Interior, *Croatia for Ukraine*, available at: <https://hrvatskazaukrajinu.gov.hr/informacije/status-privremene-zastite/152>

⁶ Government of the Republic of Croatia, *Decision on financing costs for housing care of displaced persons from Ukraine in individual accommodation*, 4 April 2024, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024_04_40_721.html

⁷ Council of the EU, *Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1836 of 25 June 2024 extending temporary protection as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382*, OJ L, 2024/1836, 3 July 2024, available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2024/1836/oj/eng#ntr3-L_202401836EN.000101-E0003

⁸ *Draft Act on Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection*, 19 December 2024, available at: <https://esavjetovanja.gov.hr/ECon/MainScreen?entityId=20131>

⁹ *Act on Amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection* (OG 17/2025), 11 February 2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_02_17_161.html

¹⁰ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

for 3,394 persons, of which 1,016 men (30%), 1,572 women (46%) and 806 children (24%).

In 2024, temporary protection was granted (regardless of the date of application) to 3,420 persons altogether, of which 1,023 men (30%), 1,584 women (46%) and 813 children (24%). This represents a 30% decrease on the number of people granted temporary protection in 2023.

According to the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy (MLPFSP), in 2024 the Croatian Institute for Social Work (CISW) appointed 16 special guardians or guardians to 16 displaced children from Ukraine who had arrived unaccompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Among them, 3 were under the age of 13, 3 were between 14 and 15 years old, and 10 were between 16 and 17. As of 31 December 2024, a total of 103 displaced children from Ukraine remained under the protection of a guardian, including 74 boys and 29 girls, according to MLPFSP data. Of these, 15 were under the age of 13, 78 were between 14 and 15 years old, and 10 were between 16 and 17. Data from the Mol however, notes that 216 unaccompanied children with temporary protection resided in Croatia by the end of 2024.¹¹

The majority of these children who arrived in Croatia unaccompanied by parents or their legal guardians were placed in collective accommodation or organised their own accommodation together with trusted persons with whom they arrived in Croatia, with these caregivers assigned as their special guardians soon after arrival, pursuant to a best interest assessment and a decision by the CISW. In 2024, three unaccompanied children were placed in institutional alternative care arrangements (community service centres), while two unaccompanied children were placed in institutions temporarily, for less than 48 hours. By the end of the year, one unaccompanied child remained in institutional care. Another unaccompanied child has been in foster care since 2023. For a further eight children without parental care, who had been placed in institutional care in Ukraine prior to flight to Croatia in 2022, the association 'Nešto više' continued to organise accommodation and support – including from NGOs, experts of the Regional Office of the CISW and the local community – in Sveta Nedelja.¹²

Table 1. Overview of temporary protection applications submitted in 2024, by category of applicants

Applications for temporary protection submitted in 2024 – categories	Total
Nationals of Ukraine – left Ukraine after 24 Feb 2022	3,424

¹¹ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

¹² Data shared by MLPFSP with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

Nationals of Ukraine – left Ukraine before 24 Feb 2022	94
Family members of Ukrainian nationals	78
Third country nationals with permanent residence in Ukraine	12
Family members of Ukrainian nationals – left Ukraine before 24 Feb 2022	4
Third country nationals granted international protection in Ukraine	1
Family members of third country nationals granted international protection in Ukraine	1
‘Humanitarian reasons - refugees’	1
Other	3

Source: Mol¹³

Table 2. Overview of temporary protection applications submitted and approved in 2024, by category of applicants

Applications for temporary protection submitted and approved in 2024 – categories	Total:
Nationals of Ukraine – left Ukraine after 24 Feb 2022	3,231
Nationals of Ukraine – left Ukraine before 24 Feb 2022	79
Family members of Ukrainian nationals	73
Third country nationals with permanent residency in Ukraine	5
Family members of Ukrainian nationals – left Ukraine before 24 Feb 2022	2
‘Humanitarian reasons – refugees’	1
Other	3

Source: Mol¹⁴

¹³ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

¹⁴ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

As of 31 December 2024, 25,997 people who were granted temporary protection in the Republic of Croatia had a registered address in Croatia. In 2024, 11,556 displaced persons from Ukraine applied for renewal of their temporary protection ID, of which 4,203 were male and 7,353 were female.

In 2024, according to the Mol, there were no recorded cases of exclusion from temporary protection under Article 80 of the AITP (if there are serious reasons to believe the person committed war crimes, crimes against peace or humanity; committed or took part in serious non-political crimes before arriving; acted against UN principles; is a threat to national security or public order, or was convicted of a serious crime punishable by 5+ years in prison). Additionally, no instances of revocation of temporary protection were found in the records of foreigners granted temporary protection. However, 59 temporary protection IDs were cancelled due to "cancellation of the status" (such as being granted temporary protection in another Member State or another type of residence based on the *Foreigners Act*) and 29 such IDs were cancelled due to "leaving the Republic of Croatia."

Regarding access to social welfare rights, according to the MLPFSP,¹⁵ 1,019 one-off financial allowances, 174 'guaranteed minimum' allowances,¹⁶ 63 compensations for vulnerable buyers of energy products, 13 personal disability allowances, 71 inclusive supplements and 8 assistance and care allowances were granted to refugees from Ukraine by decision of the competent regional offices of the CISW in 2024. In comparison to 2023, this represents a decrease of 46% in the number of approved one-off financial allowances, a significant increase of 129% in the number of approved guaranteed minimum allowances, and a decrease of 57% in the number of approved personal disability allowances, while the number of approved assistance and care allowances decreased by 11%. Inclusive supplements are new to the Croatian social welfare system,¹⁷ and are a financial benefit intended for a person with a disability to overcome various obstacles that may prevent their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. On 31 December 2024, 189 persons displaced from Ukraine were granted allowances from the social welfare system.¹⁸

On 31 December 2024, 440 persons granted temporary protection were registered in the records of the Croatian Employment Service (CES), of which 77% were women and 23% were men. 54% were between the ages of 30 and 49, 32% were older than 50, and 14% belonged to the 15 to 29 age group. 33% had completed elementary school, 39% had completed secondary school, and 28% had completed university or a higher level of education. In 2024, the CES conducted 691 individual consultations with persons granted temporary protection, while 103 persons were included in 'active

¹⁵ Data shared by MLPFSP with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

¹⁶ The guaranteed minimum allowance is a benefit provided by the social welfare system, ensuring that individuals or households who lack sufficient funds receive a certain amount of money to cover their basic living needs.

¹⁷ *Inclusive Supplement Act* (OG 156/23), 1 January 2024, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_12_156_2383.html

¹⁸ Data shared by MLPFSP with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

employment policy measures' (initiatives such as provision of employment/self-employment allowances, training allowances, on-the-job training, participation in public works, etc.). People granted temporary protection are allowed to participate in training programs through a voucher system with conditions additional to those that apply to Croatian citizens, namely knowledge of the Croatian language (or English) for the purposes of participation in classes and the completion of the foreign diploma recognition process. Furthermore, through the Institute's support, 502 persons granted temporary protection were employed in 2024, of which 79% were women and 21% were men. Most were employed in hospitality, maintenance of tourism facilities, sales, manufacturing, and administrative activities. In 2024, the interest of employers in employing persons granted temporary protection was similar to the interest expressed in 2023, with 519 inquiries sent to the CES in 2024 compared to 517 inquiries the year before.¹⁹

3. DEVELOPMENTS IN ASYLUM LEGISLATION AND POLICY

3.1. *Developments at the EU level*

After extensive negotiations, a political agreement on the new Pact on Migration and Asylum (the Pact) was reached in December 2023.²⁰ Final adoption of the Pact followed in spring 2024 after the European Parliament's adoption on 10 April²¹ and the Council's adoption on 14 May.²² The Pact consists of ten documents (regulations and directives) which will introduce numerous changes to the EU asylum and migration system (the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation,²³ the Screening

¹⁹ Data shared by the CES with UNHCR in January 2025, on file with CLC.

²⁰ Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, *Historic agreement reached today by the European Parliament and Council on the Pact on Migration and Asylum*, 20 December 2023, available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/historic-agreement-reached-today-european-parliament-and-council-pact-migration-and-asylum-2023-12-20_en

²¹ European Parliament, *MEPs approve the new Migration and Asylum Pact*, 10 April 2024, available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240408IPR20290/meps-approve-the-new-migration-and-asylum-pact>

²² Council of the EU, *The Council adopts the EU's pact on migration and asylum*, 14 May 2024, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/05/14/the-council-adopts-the-eu-s-pact-on-migration-and-asylum/>

²³ *Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1147 and (EU) 2021/1060 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 604/2013*, PE/21/2024/REV/1, OJ L 2024/1351, 22 May 2024, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1351>

Regulations,²⁴ the Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation,²⁵ the Asylum Procedure Regulation,²⁶ the Eurodac Regulation,²⁷ the Return Border Procedure Regulation,²⁸ the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation,²⁹ the Qualification Regulation,³⁰ and the Reception Standards Directive³¹).³² After the Pact's entry into force on 11 June 2024, the European Commission adopted the *Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum*.³³ Following this framework,

²⁴ Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 introducing the screening of third-country nationals at the external borders and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817, PE/20/2024/REV/1, OJ L, 2024/1356, 22 May 2024, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1356>, and Regulation (EU) 2024/1352 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 amending Regulations (EU) 2019/816 and (EU) 2019/818 for the purpose of introducing the screening of third-country nationals at the external borders, PE/22/2024/REV/1, OJ L, 2024/1352, 22 May 2024, available at:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1352/oj>

²⁵ Regulation (EU) 2024/1359 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 addressing situations of crisis and force majeure in the field of migration and asylum and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1147, PE/19/2024/REV/1, OJ L, 2024/1359, 22 May 2024, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1359>

²⁶ Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU, PE/16/2024/REV/1, OJ L, 2024/1348, 22 May 2024, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1348>

²⁷ Regulation (EU) 2024/1358 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on the establishment of 'Eurodac' for the comparison of biometric data in order to effectively apply Regulations (EU) 2024/1351 and (EU) 2024/1350 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Directive 2001/55/EC and to identify illegally staying third-country nationals and stateless persons and on requests for the comparison with Eurodac data by Member States' law enforcement authorities and Europol for law enforcement purposes, amending Regulations (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, PE/15/2024/REV/1, OJ L, 2024/1358, 22 May 2024, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32024R1358>

²⁸ Regulation (EU) 2024/1349 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a return border procedure, and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1148, PE/17/2024/REV/1, OJ L, 2024/1349, 22 May 2024, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1349>

²⁹ Regulation (EU) 2024/1350 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework, and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1147, PE/18/2024/REV/1, OJ L, 2024/1350, 22 May 2024, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1350>

³⁰ Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted, amending Council Directive 2003/109/EC and repealing Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, PE/70/2023/REV/1, OJ L, 2024/1347, 22 May 2024, available at: <https://eurlex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32024R1347>

³¹ Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, PE/69/2023/REV/1, OJ L, 2024/1346, 22 May 2024, available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AL_202401346

³² For further details on the potential positive and negative aspects of the Pact in Croatian Law Centre's *National Asylum Report 2023*, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/18/nacionalni-izvjestaj-o-sustavu-azila-za-2023-godinu/>

³³ Commission of the EU, *Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum*, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2024%3A251%3AFIN>

EU Member States began drafting their national implementation plans, which were due for submission to the Commission in December 2024.³⁴ Finally, the Pact shall enter into force by mid-2026.³⁵

As mentioned above, in June 2024, the Council of the EU announced that temporary protection for people fleeing Ukraine would be extended from 4 March 2025 to 4 March 2026.³⁶

Several European countries, including Croatia, suspended decision-making on asylum claims by Syrians towards the end of 2024, citing changing conditions in Syria after al-Assad's fall. While some are exploring possible returns, others are taking a more cautious approach, pausing decisions until the situation becomes clearer.³⁷ UNHCR stated that the temporary suspension is acceptable as long as asylum applications can still be submitted and stressed that no Syrian seeking international protection should be forcibly returned, as this would breach non-refoulement obligations. It urged States to maintain access to protection while closely monitoring the evolving situation.³⁸

3.2. Legislation and policies in Croatia

In the reporting period, certain amendments to the AITP have been proposed to ensure alignment with evolving requirements. Additionally, funding has been approved for various projects related to international protection, and municipal-level³⁹ decisions and activities have been adopted to support implementation.

On 19 December 2024, the Croatian Government launched an e-consultation⁴⁰ on the *Act on Amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection* (Draft Act) proposing several changes:

³⁴ Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, *Common Implementation Plan to turn the Pact on Migration and Asylum into a reality*, 12 June 2024, available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/common-implementation-plan-turn-pact-migration-and-asylum-reality-2024-06-12_en

³⁵ European Commission, *Pact on Migration and Asylum - A common EU system to manage migration*, 21 May 2024, available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en

³⁶ Council of the EU, *Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1836 of 25 June 2024 extending temporary protection as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382*, OJ L, 2024/1836, 3 July 2024, available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2024/1836/oj/eng#ntr3-L_202401836EN.000101-E0003

³⁷ Euractiv, *EU member states halt Syrian asylum applications following Assad regime fall*, 10 December 2024, available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/eu-member-states-halt-syrian-asylum-applications-following-assad-regime-fall/>

³⁸ UNHCR, *Syria: UNHCR comment on asylum processing suspension and returns*, 10 December 2024, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/syria-unhcr-comment-asylum-processing-suspension-and-returns>

³⁹ See chapter 5.3.

⁴⁰ Ministry of the Interior, *Open e-consultation for the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection*, 19 December 2024, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/vijesti/otvoreno-e-savjetovanje-za-nacrt-zakona-o-izmjenama-i-dopunama-zakona-o-medjunarodnoj-i-privremenoj-zastiti/294523>

- Although the EU Council extended temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine until 4 March 2026, Croatian legislation did not allow for an extension beyond 4 March 2025, limiting the status to a maximum of three years. Accordingly, the provision on the maximum duration of temporary protection of three years was removed.
- The AITP was aligned with Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 (on asylum and migration management),⁴¹ requiring the adoption of a *Strategic Planning Act* for the implementation of the asylum and migration management system. The aim is to establish a strategic approach and ensure the necessary capacities for the effective functioning of the asylum and migration management system. To this end, a new chapter has been added to the *Draft Act on Strategic Planning for the Implementation of the Asylum and Migration Management System*.⁴²
- The AITP provision on relocation was replaced with a provision on the Annual Solidarity Pool (as defined in Article 56[2] of Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 on asylum and migration management), which envisages relocation, financial contributions and alternative solidarity measures in the field of migration, reception, asylum, return and reintegration, and border management.
- Reinforcing the strengthened role of the special guardian in the care of unaccompanied and separated children, especially in relation to tracing family members and reuniting the child with the family, by reiterating the urgency of this action and the principle of confidentiality for unaccompanied children in the temporary protection procedure.
- Reinforcing the right to access recreational activities, including open-air play and other age-appropriate activities for child applicants for temporary protection.

The Draft Act was referred to the urgent legislative procedure, and was adopted by the Croatian Parliament in January, entering into force on 11 February 2025.⁴³

Despite the adoption by the Government of the *Decision on Establishment of the Interdepartmental Working Group for Drafting the Immigration Policy of the Republic of Croatia* in December 2022,⁴⁴ no such policy has been adopted yet. As such, Croatia has not had a migration policy since the beginning of 2016 when the *Migration Policy of the Republic of Croatia for the period 2013-2015* expired.⁴⁵ The situation is similar

⁴¹ Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1147 and (EU) 2021/1060 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, OJ L, 2024/1351, 22 May 2024, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1351/oj/eng>

⁴² Act on Amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection (OG 17/2025), 11 February 2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/full/2025_02_17_161.html

⁴³ Act on Amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection (OG 17/2025), 11 February 2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/full/2025_02_17_161.html

⁴⁴ Government of the Republic of Croatia, 178th session of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, 16 December 2023, available at: <https://vlada.gov.hr/sjednice/178-sjednica-vlade-republike-hrvatske-37523/37523>

⁴⁵ Croatian Parliament, *Migration policy of the Republic of Croatia for the period 2013-2015*, 22 February 2013, available at:

with regards to Croatia's integration policy, as the last Action Plan for Integration was adopted for 2017-2019. However, in December 2023, at the Council for Demographic Revitalization, the Government presented a proposal⁴⁶ for a *Demographic Revitalization Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2033*,⁴⁷ to be considered as a basis for the development and adoption of a subsequent migration and integration policy document or documents. The Croatian Parliament adopted this Strategy in March 2024.

In March, the Mol signed an agreement to fund the "*Free Legal Aid in International Protection Procedures*" project under the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund.⁴⁸ The project seeks to ensure free legal aid in the appeal procedures.

In July, the Mol signed an agreement for the direct allocation of funds to implement the "TRANSFER" project.⁴⁹ This project aims to provide appropriate transportation for applicants for international protection to reception centres, designated accommodation sites, locations for submitting applications for international protection and screening locations as envisioned by the Pact.

In August, the Mol signed a second addendum to the funding agreement for the project "*Strengthening National and FRONTEX Capacities for EU Border Surveillance*" under the Border Management and Visa Instrument.⁵⁰ The funds are intended for enhancing border security through the acquisition of drone detection systems, vessels, off-road vehicles and drones, supporting Croatia's border police and FRONTEX in surveillance, rapid response, and tackling cross-border crime and irregular migration.

https://mup.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/ministarstvo/2013/Migration%20policy%20RoC_en_2013%2002%2005.pdf

⁴⁶ Government of the Republic of Croatia, *Demographic revitalization is the main priority of the Croatian people and Croatian society*, 22 December 2023, available at: <https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/demografiska-revitalizacija-predstavlja-glavni-prioritet-hrvatskoga-naroda-i-hrvatskoga-drustva/40639>.

⁴⁷ *Demographic Revitalization Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2033* (OG 36/2024), 14 March 2024, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2024_03_36_580.html

⁴⁸ Ministry of the Interior, *Agreement on direct allocation of financial resources*, 28 October 2024, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/vijesti/sporazum-o-izravnoj-dodjeli-financijskih-sredstava/294349>

⁴⁹ Ministry of the Interior, *An Agreement has been concluded on the direct allocation of financial resources for the implementation of the project "TRANSFER - Providing support to applicants for international protection by ensuring appropriate transportation"*, 9 August 2024, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/vijesti/sklopljen-je-sporazum-o-izravnoj-dodjeli-financijskih-sredstava-za-provedbu-projekta-transfer-pruzanje-potpore-traziteljima-medjunarodne-zastite-osiguravanjem-odgovarajuceg-prijevoza/294201>

⁵⁰ Ministry of the Interior, *The Second Supplement to the Agreement on the direct allocation of financial resources for the implementation of the project "Strengthening national and FRONTEX capacities for the control of the external border of the European Union" has been concluded*, 9 August 2024, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/vijesti/sklopljen-je-drugi-dodatak-sporazumu-o-izravnoj-dodjeli-financijskih-sredstava-za-provedbu-projekta-jacanje-nacionalnih-i-frontex-ovih-kapaciteta-za-nadzor-vanjske-granice-europske-unije/294203>

In December, the Minister of the Interior met with the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs and Migration to discuss asylum and migration.⁵¹ They noted a growing consensus among EU Member States on outsourcing the processing of international protection applications and the need for changes to the Return Directive.

On 9 December 2024, the Mol announced that Croatia is temporarily suspending the processing of applications for international protection by Syrian nationals, following similar decisions by several European countries. Syrian citizens whose applications for international protection have been suspended continue to have the status of applicants as before and, accordingly, all the rights prescribed by the AITP.⁵²

Implementation of the *Decision on Relocation of Citizens of Third Countries or Stateless Persons who meet the Conditions for Approval of International Protection*,⁵³ adopted by the Croatian Government on 29 July 2022, continued throughout 2024. In 2024, a total of 28 individuals seeking international protection were relocated from Italy to Croatia.⁵⁴

4. ASYLUM IN PRACTICE: ACCESS TO THE ASYLUM SYSTEM AND REFUGEE STATUS DETERMINATION

4.1. Access to territory and the asylum system

In 2024, the number of irregular border crossings has dropped significantly compared to the previous year. According to data from the Mol, 29,294 irregular migrants were recorded in 2024, representing a 58% decrease. The most numerous were nationals of Syria (8,947 or 30%), Türkiye (8,559 or 29%), and Afghanistan (2,717 or 9%).⁵⁵ On the official website of the Mol, on January 17, 2025, a news article was published in which Minister Božinović highlighted that in 2024, the Croatian police prevented 71,000 irregular border crossings.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Ministry of the Interior, *Božinović: consensus is being created on the externalization of the asylum procedure*, 5 December 2024, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/vijesti/bozinovic-stvara-se-konsenzus-oko-eksternalizacije-postupka-azila/294443>

⁵² Ministry of the Interior, *Minister Božinović: Croatia temporarily suspends asylum applications from Syrians*, 9 December 2024, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/vijesti/ministar-bozinovic-hrvatska-privremeno-obustavlja-zahtjeve-za-azil-sirijcima/294506>

⁵³ Government of the Republic of Croatia, *Decision on Relocation Of Citizens Of Third Countries or Stateless Persons Who Meet The Conditions for Approval of International Protection* (OG 88/22), 28 July 2022, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2022_07_88_1366.html

⁵⁴ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in April 2025, on file with CLC

⁵⁵ Ministry of the Interior, *Statistical Overview of Basic Safety Indicators and Work Results in 2024*, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-mup-a-i-bilteni-o-sigurnosti-cestovnog-prometa/283233>

⁵⁶ Ministry of the Interior, *The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Božinović visited the State border in the Brod-Posavina Police Department: "This police force, as it is, is, I am sure, one of the most efficient and effective in the entire European Union."*, published on 17 January 2025, available at: <https://policija.gov.hr/vijesti/potpredsjednik-vlade-i-ministar-bozinovic-obisao-drzavnu-granicu-u-pu->

According to the Ombudswoman's report for 2024, there has been a decrease in the number of reported pushbacks and complaints filed. However, the Ombudswoman notes that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) continue to report that they collected testimonies of pushbacks.⁵⁷

The report *Pushed, Beaten, Left to Die – European Pushback Report 2024*⁵⁸, published in collaboration with NGOs from Belgium, Poland, Croatia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Latvia, presents data gathered on pushbacks from Croatia by Save the Children. According to this, 1,905 people were allegedly pushed back from Croatia in 2024, including 333 children, of whom 228 were unaccompanied or separated children. This is 43% less than the figures reported by the Danish Refugee Council in 2023,⁵⁹ however data collection methodologies may differ.

In 2024, the organization No Name Kitchen published *Burned Borders: A No Name Kitchen Investigation on Illegal Croatian Police Practices*.⁶⁰ The report states that between October 2023 and August 2024, field searches found "burn piles." In the ashes, they identified items such as melted phones, remnants of clothing and footwear, and passports. No Name Kitchen concludes that the Croatian police are responsible for this, based on the locations, testimonies collected, and the items found, as these are sites where the report states there is a high presence of police. The Guardian published an article on this report,⁶¹ following which the MoI issued an official statement on the Ministry's website,⁶² stating that the alleged events had not been confirmed, and that the Independent Monitoring Mechanism had not received any complaints in this regard. They further stated that they had no knowledge of the reported events and noted that sometimes migrants leave personal belongings behind in order to hinder further identification. The Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM) was established in June 2021 and conducts its activities based on a Cooperation Agreement with the MoI, the first of which was signed in June 2021. In November 2022, a new Cooperation Agreement was concluded, continuing the work of the IMM between the same stakeholders. The Mechanism's 'semi-annual' report was published

brodsko-posavskoj-ova-i-ovakva-policija-je-siguran-sam-jedna-od-najucinkovitijih-i-najdjelotvornijih-u-cijeloi-europskoj-uniji/8566

⁵⁷ Report of the Ombudswoman for 2024, p. 270, 4 April 2025, available at: <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/ljudska-prava-u-hrvatskoj-na-ekanju-siroma-tvo-je-u-porastu-besku-nici-i-starije-osobe-najugro-eniji/>

⁵⁸ Centre for Peace Studies, *Pushed, Beaten, Left to Die – European Pushback Report 2024*, available at: <https://www.cms.hr/publikacija/pushed-beaten-left-to-die-european-pushback-report-2024/>

⁵⁹ Danish Refugee Council, *Border Monitoring Factsheet*, 2022 – 2024, available at: <https://drc.ngo/resources/documents/border-monitoring-factsheet/>

⁶⁰ No Name Kitchen, *Burned Borders: A No Name Kitchen Investigation on Illegal Croatian Police Practices*, available at: <https://read-me.org/more-crime-prevention/2025/1/13/burned-borders-a-no-name-kitchen-investigation-on-illegal-croatian-police-practices>

⁶¹ The Guardian, *Croatian police accused of burning asylum seekers' phones and passports*, 10 October 2024, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/oct/10/photos-croatia-police-phones-passports-asylum-seekers>

⁶² Ministry of the Interior, *Responding to allegations from The Guardian article*, 10 October 2024, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/vijesti/reagiranje-na-optuzbe-iz-clanka-portala-the-guardian/294309>

in July 2024.⁶³ The report highlights that due to various challenges, its publication was delayed, along with certain activities. The report states that most of the monitoring activities took place between 4 November 2022 and 15 June 2023. Furthermore, challenges in implementing activities were highlighted, including irregular disbursement of project funds and communication difficulties. The report covers three distinct periods: the first period, from July 2022 to June 2023, during which most IMM activities were carried out; the second period, from June 2023 to December 2023; and the final period, from December 2023 to July 2024. During this period, the Mechanism conducted only four direct observations, mainly based on information gathered from the media, and this was attributed to communication challenges with the Mol. The report notes that the Chair of the Coordination Board of the IMM resigned from the position on September 21, 2023, and that the position remained unfilled by the time the report was written in July 2024. A new Chair was subsequently appointed in December 2024. In August 2024, the Mechanism launched its website,⁶⁴ which includes an online form through which individuals can submit information regarding the conduct of police officers, with disclaimer included on the site that IMM is not a complaint-based mechanism.

The registration centre in Dugi Dol, in the Krnjak municipality, expanded its capacity in 2024 from 500 to 1,500 individuals, according to media reports. It may be used in future for longer stays, ranging from at least 7 days to 12 weeks, for the purpose of implementing the new Screening Regulation under the Pact.⁶⁵

4.2. Expressions of intention and applications for international protection

According to the Mol,⁶⁶ in 2024, 26,776 persons expressed their intention to apply for international protection (19,907 male and 6,869 female).⁶⁷ This is a 61% decrease compared to 2023 when 68,114 people expressed their intention to seek asylum.⁶⁸ The largest number of people who expressed their intention to seek asylum were nationals of Syria (7,560 or 33%), Türkiye (5,759 or 25%), Russia (4,057 or 18%) and Afghanistan (2,293 or 10%).

Most applicants for international protection were registered at border police stations, police stations and police administrations (25,739 or 96%). The place where most intentions were expressed was the Stara Gradiška border police station (3,681 or

⁶³ Independent Monitoring Mechanism, *Semi-annual report 2024*, available at: <https://www.nmn.hr/reports/20>

⁶⁴ For further details on the Independent Monitoring Mechanism, see its official website, available at: <https://www.nmn.hr/>

⁶⁵ HRT, *The migrant centre in Dugi Dol is expanding its capacity and introducing new functions*, published on 22 November 2024, available at: <https://vijesti.hrt.hr/hrvatska/centar-za-migrante-u-dugom-dolu-siri-kapacitete-i-uvodi-nove-funkcije-11873430>

⁶⁶ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

⁶⁷ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

⁶⁸ Ministry of the Interior, *Statistical indicators for applicants for international protection in 2024*, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-trazitelji-medjunarodne-zastite/283234>

14%), followed by the Slavonski Brod border police station (3,119 or 12%) and the Dvor border police station (2,378 or 9%). A very low percentage of applicants for international protection (296 or 1%) were registered at airport police stations in Zagreb (Pleso) (293 or 99.1%), Zadar (2 or 0.6%) and Split (Resnik) (1 or 0.3%). A very low number of applicants for international protection (195 or 0.7%) were registered while they were detained in detention centres - the 'Reception Centre for Foreigners' (RCF) in Ježevo (90 or 0.3%), the 'Transit Reception Centre' (TRC) in Tovarnik (34 or 0.1%), and the TRC in Trilj (71 or 0.2%), and the total number of asylum claims registered in detention in 2024 increased by 5% compared to the previous year.

Regarding submission of applications for international protection, the number of full applications submitted continued to fall in real terms, to 1,311 (down 22% from 1,685 in 2023, itself a 37% decrease on the 2,655 applications submitted in 2022).⁶⁹ The number of applications lodged represents 4% of all intentions registered (although a small number of applications may have been submitted by those who registered in the previous year), up from 2% in 2023, but down from 21% in 2022.

4.3. The Dublin procedure

According to data from the Mol,⁷⁰ in 2024 Croatia received 24,363 incoming requests in the following categories: 22,722 or 93,2% take back requests, 914 (4%) take charge requests, 151 (0.6%) requests for information, 523 (2%) requests for the take back reconsideration and 53 (0.2%) requests for reconsideration of take charge requests. In 2024, there were a total of 1,698 incoming transfers. Of these, the largest number of people were transferred from Germany (514 or 30%), Switzerland (348 or 20%), Austria (249 or 15%), France (215 or 13%) and Netherlands (106 or 6%).⁷¹ The total number of incoming requests in 2024 significantly increased compared to the year before, by 89%.

The most common criterion used for incoming requests was Article 18(1)(b) of the Dublin Regulation, which states that a Member State (MS) has to take back 'an applicant whose application is under examination and who made an application in another MS or who is on the territory of another MS without a residence document,' and requests were most often accepted on the grounds of Article 20(5) of the Dublin Regulation, which stipulates that 'an applicant who is present in another MS without a residence document or who there lodges an application for international protection after withdrawing his or her first application made in a different MS during the process of determining the MS responsible shall be taken back, under the conditions laid down in Articles 23, 24, 25 and 29, by the MS with which that application for international

⁶⁹ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

⁷⁰ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

⁷¹ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

protection was first lodged, with a view to completing the process of determining the MS responsible.⁷²

As for outgoing requests, in 2024, Croatia submitted 779 outgoing requests under the Dublin Regulation in the following categories: 682 (87.5%) take back requests, 14 (2%) take charge requests, 80 (10.2%) requests for information, 2 (0.2%) requests for the reconsideration of take back request and 1 request (0.1%) for reconsideration of a take charge request. In 2024, 18 outgoing transfers took place from Croatia to other countries. The largest number of transfers was to France (5 or 27%), Austria (4 or 22%) and Germany (3 or 16%).⁷³ The most common criterion for outgoing requests was Article 18(1)(b) of the Dublin Regulation, which states that a responsible MS has to take back an applicant whose application is under examination and who made an application in another MS or who is on the territory of another MS without a residence document. The total number of outgoing requests significantly increased in 2024 compared to 2023, by 312%.

In the context of case law related to the Dublin Regulation, it is evident that courts in these cases generally shared consistent views regarding the asylum system in Croatia and its effectiveness.⁷⁴ In one such case, the Supreme Court of Slovenia (*Vrhovno sodišče*) dealt with an individual of unknown nationality who applied for international protection in Slovenia. After determining that Croatia was responsible for processing the application, the Court ruled that there were no obstacles to returning the applicant to Croatia in relation to a risk of inhumane or degrading treatment. The Court acknowledged the existence of shortcomings within the system but concluded that these alone were insufficient grounds for granting protection from inhuman treatment. The Court emphasized that the applicant had not presented any personal circumstances, such as health conditions, that would demonstrate a specific risk of being subjected to such treatment upon return to Croatia.⁷⁵

In two further cases involving applicants for international protection with unknown nationality, the Supreme Court of Slovenia, when ruling on appeals against decisions to return individuals to Croatia under the Dublin Regulation, adopted the same approach, distinguishing between individuals who irregularly cross borders and those being transferred to Croatia under the Dublin procedure. In the first case,⁷⁶ the Court concluded that the applicant's claims regarding alleged pushbacks were irrelevant and,

⁷² Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast), OJ L 180, 29/6/2013, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/604/oj>

⁷³ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

⁷⁴ Only a few selected cases are mentioned in the report for illustrative purposes. More detailed information on each individual case can be found on the EUAA Case Law Database website: <https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/Pages/publications.aspx>

⁷⁵ EUAA Case Law Database, *Applicant v Ministry of the Interior (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Slovenia)*, available at: <https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=4265>

⁷⁶ EUAA Case Law Database, *Applicant v Ministry of the Interior (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Slovenia)*, available at: <https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=4266>

based on available reports, found no evidence suggesting that the individual would be denied access to the asylum system in accordance with Article 3 of the Dublin III Regulation. In the second case,⁷⁷ the Supreme Court, in response to the applicant's appeal, concluded that the Administrative Court correctly distinguished between the treatment of individuals who cross borders irregularly and those being returned under the Dublin procedure. The Court upheld the lower court's decision, agreeing that the applicant's statements were insufficient to establish any deficiencies in the Croatian asylum system.

In another case⁷⁸ before the Supreme Court of Slovenia, a family with a six-month-old child had applied for international protection in Slovenia. It was determined that Croatia was the responsible country for processing their application under the Dublin Regulation. The family appealed this decision to the Administrative Court, which accepted their appeal and sent the case back to the Interior Ministry for reconsideration. The Administrative Court ruled that the hygiene conditions in Croatian reception centres, where the family would be accommodated, did not sufficiently protect the best interests of the child and could expose them to inhuman or degrading treatment. The Ministry of the Interior appealed this decision, arguing that the principle of mutual trust between Member States should guide the case. The Supreme Court of Slovenia annulled the lower court's decision, concluding that the Administrative Court had applied excessively high standards in assessing the accommodation conditions for applicants for international protection. The Supreme Court also stated that, although one of the applicants was an infant, this did not automatically mean that their return to Croatia would violate Article 4 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights nor negate the principle of mutual trust. Furthermore, the Supreme Court emphasized that courts, when making decisions, must take into account both the subjective and objective circumstances of each case.

In a case before the Netherlands Council of State (*Afdeling Bestuursrechtspraak van de Raad van State*),⁷⁹ a Syrian national had applied for international protection in the Netherlands, but it was determined that Croatia was the responsible country for processing the application. The applicant decided to appeal the decision, arguing that being returned to Croatia could expose them to serious risks, including violent pushbacks and inadequate reception conditions. In this case, the Court concluded that a distinction must be made between the situation of irregular migrants and those being returned under the Dublin procedure. It emphasized that individuals in the Dublin procedure have access to the asylum process and to reception, as well as an

⁷⁷ EUAA Case Law Database, *Applicant v Ministry of the Interior (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Slovenia)*, available at: <https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=4478>

⁷⁸ EUAA Case Law Database, *Ministry of the Interior (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Slovenia) v Applicant*, available at: <https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=4479>

⁷⁹ EUAA Case Law Database, *Applicant v The Minister for Asylum and Migration (de Minister van Asiel en Migratie)*, available at: <https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=4604>

identification card and legal assistance. The Court also affirmed that the principle of mutual trust should be applied in the context of Dublin transfers to Croatia.

4.4. Restriction of freedom of movement

According to the Mol,⁸⁰ in 2024, the SRA issued 52 decisions on restriction of freedom of movement, which is an increase of 11% compared to 2023. Most of the applicants for international protection subjected to restrictions of freedom of movement were detained in the RCF in Ježevo (50 or 96%). Two applicants were detained in TRC Trilj.

Among asylum seekers detained by decision of the SRA, 94% were male (2 boys and 47 men) and 4% were female (3 women).

Regarding the legal basis for detention, for 31 applicants for international protection (60%), freedom of movement had been restricted on the basis of Article 54(2)(7) of the AITP (for attempting to avoid deportation by applying for asylum), for 11 (21%), detention was on the basis of Article 54(2)(3) of the AITP (protection of national security or public order), for five (10%) it was on the basis of Article 54(2)(5) of the AITP (prevention of endangering people's lives and property), for three (6%), it was on the basis of Article 54(2)(2) (establishment and verification of identity and nationality), and for two people 4%) detention was on the basis of Article 54(2)(1) of the AITP (establishing the facts/circumstances of the asylum claim). During 2024, there were no applicants for international protection for whom alternatives to detention were applied, as in 2023. According to the Mol, in 2024 two unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were detained. In comparison, in 2023, only one asylum-seeking child was detained, accompanied by their family.

Judicial review of decisions on restriction of freedom of movement of applicants for international protection is carried out by administrative courts. In 2024, the Administrative Court in Zagreb adopted 95 decisions in proceedings related to restriction of freedom of movement, which is an 86% increase on the 51 such cases in 2023. Of these, 81 appeals were rejected (i.e. the individuals were to remain detained), 9 were upheld (i.e. the individuals were released), three cases were referred back to Mol for a new decision, while one case was suspended and another dismissed. The average duration of these procedures was 44 days.⁸¹ Other administrative courts in Croatia did not take decisions in disputes regarding the restriction of freedom of movement in 2024.

In 12 cases, the High Administrative Court decided on appeals against decisions of administrative courts concerning detention, 9 more than in 2023, which represents an increase of 300%. In 11 cases the appeals were rejected (i.e. the individuals remained in detention centres), while one case was upheld (i.e. the applicant was released).⁸²

⁸⁰ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

⁸¹ Data shared by the Administrative Court in Zagreb in January 2025, on file with CLC.

⁸² Data shared by the High Administrative Court in Zagreb in January 2025, on file with CLC.

Throughout 2024, the Croatian Red Cross (CRC) continued to implement its program of providing psychosocial support and facilitating the restoration of family links on a regular basis with persons placed in detention centres, based on an agreement with the Mol.⁸³

4.5. Refugee status determination (RSD) procedure

In 2024, 71 people were granted asylum, of which 19 were men (27%), 20 were boys (28%), 13 were women (18%) and 19 were girls (27%). In addition, nine people were granted subsidiary protection, including three men, three boys, two women and one girl.⁸⁴ Figures were not provided on how many asylum seekers benefited from special reception and procedural guarantees.

The first instance recognition rate in 2024 was 21%, down from 34% in 2023, although it should be noted that some cases decided in 2024 may have been lodged earlier, and not all those claims lodged in 2024 would have reached the decision-making stage within the year.⁸⁵

In 2024, a total of 359 international protection applications were decided *in meritum*, which is 83% more than in 2023. In total, 279 cases were rejected.⁸⁶ This remains below the EU average for 2024, which stood at 42%.⁸⁷ Overall, 4.9% of those who registered as applicants for international protection submitted a full application (1,307 out of 26,776), compared to 2.5% the year before (1,685 out of 68,114 in 2023). Ultimately, only 1.3% of the 26,776 individuals who expressed their intention to seek asylum reached the *in meritum* decision-making stage, compared to 0.2% in 2023,⁸⁸ primarily due to fast onwards movement, with individuals leaving Croatia prior to the conclusion of their asylum claim.

In 2024, 14 applicants for international protection were processed in an accelerated procedure, pursuant to Article 41 of the AITP. They were nationals of Algeria, Burundi, Morocco, Nepal, Serbia, Tunisia, and Türkiye, while one person was stateless.

The Mol dismissed applications on the grounds of inadmissibility in 232 cases. The reasons were as follows: for 41 applicants, or 18%, Article 43(1)(1) of the AITP was invoked (granted international protection in another EU MS); for 152 applicants, or 66%, this was on the basis of Article 43(1)(5) of the AITP (another EU MS was responsible for examining the application); for two applicants, or 0.1%, dismissal of the

⁸³ Data shared by CRC with CLC in January 2024, on file with CLC.

⁸⁴ Mol, Statistical indicators for applicants for international protection in 2024, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-trazitelji-medjunarodne-zastite/283234>

⁸⁵ EUAA, *Latest Asylum Trends 2024 Annual Analysis*, 3 March 2025, available at: <https://euaa.europa.eu/publications/latest-asylum-trends-2024-annual-analysis>

⁸⁶ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC. The data from the Mol and the EUAA differ. According to the EUAA, 312 decisions were issued, of which 65 were positive.

⁸⁷ EUAA, *Latest Asylum Trends 2024 Annual Analysis*, 3 March 2025, available at: <https://euaa.europa.eu/publications/latest-asylum-trends-2024-annual-analysis>

⁸⁸ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2024, on file with CLC.

application was on the basis of Article 43(1)(6) of the AITP (the applicant was a national of an EU MS), and for 37 applicants, or 16%, dismissal was on the basis of Article 43(2) of the AITP (dismissal of a subsequent application determined not to contain relevant facts, among other reasons). Based on the 'safe country of origin' concept, 7 applications for international protection were rejected as manifestly unfounded.⁸⁹

Regarding the 179 RSD appeals⁹⁰ lodged during 2024, most were before the Administrative Court in Zagreb,⁹¹ which received a total of 174 appeals – an increase of 346% compared to 2023.⁹² The majority were rejected (143, or 82%), whilst five were upheld. In rejected cases, the majority concerned nationals of Russia (23%), Burundi (17%), Türkiye (16%), and Côte d'Ivoire (7%).⁹³ A further 15 were referred back to the first instance decision-maker (i.e. to the Mol); in five cases, the procedure was suspended, and six cases were transferred to another court. The average duration of these appeals procedures was 129 days - a slight increase compared to 2023.⁹⁴

A total of three appeals were initiated before the Administrative Court in Rijeka during 2024, of which two were rejected, while one case was transferred to another court. The average duration in these cases was five and a half months.⁹⁵ Two appeals were also initiated before the Administrative Court in Split, and at the time of writing this report were still pending.

In 2023, the High Administrative Court⁹⁶ decided on 17 second instance appeals in RSD cases, of which 16 were rejected (i.e. denied international protection) and one was upheld.

5. ASYLUM IN PRACTICE: ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND SERVICES

5.1. Reception conditions

Although the Government declared⁹⁷ the end of the pandemic in May 2023, civil society organizations continue to be restricted from accessing the RCAIPs in Zagreb and Kutina. Currently, only CRC and Médecins du Monde Belgique (MdM-BELGIQUE) are permitted access to both RCAIPs based on their agreements with the Mol.

On 6 November 2024, the Coordination for Integration (composed of civil society organizations) held a meeting with the Mol to exchange experiences and establish

⁸⁹ Data shared by Mol with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

⁹⁰ In Croatian, *tužba*.

⁹¹ Data shared by the Administrative Court in Zagreb in January 2025, on file with CLC.

⁹² In 2023, the Administrative Court in Zagreb received 39 cases in the RSD procedure.

⁹³ Data shared by Administrative Court in Zagreb with UNHCR in January 2025, on file with CLC.

⁹⁴ In 2023, the average duration was 120 days.

⁹⁵ Data shared by the Administrative Court in Rijeka with CLC in January 2025, on file with CLC.

⁹⁶ Data shared by the High Administrative Court in January 2025, on file with CLC.

⁹⁷ Government of the Republic of Croatia, 11 May 2023, available at: <https://vlada.gov.hr/sjednice/215-sjednica-vlade-republike-hrvatske-38291/38291>

cooperation so as to identify the potential needs of applicants for international protection and the activities conducted by civil society organizations that could address these needs. It was agreed that further cooperation would be pursued through additional meetings aimed at continued experience-sharing.

The 2024 report of the Croatian Ombudswoman emphasised that although reception capacities were not as strained in 2024 due to a lower number of applicants, complaints concerning accommodation conditions continued to be received. The report underlined the need for a systemic response to persistent hygiene, health, and safety risks, as well as the importance of taking into account the gender and age-specific characteristics and vulnerabilities of asylum seekers, including the implementation of measures aimed at preventing violence, gender-based abuse, and harassment.⁹⁸

In 2024, a total of 498 applicants for international protection were accommodated in social welfare institutions outside the RCAIP, in accordance with Article 15 of the AITP.⁹⁹

5.2. Access to rights and services

In 2024, 247 applicants for international protection applied for a work certificate, of which 236 were approved and 11 were rejected.¹⁰⁰ This represents a slight increase (3%) on the 236 issued in 2023, and corresponds to 19% of those asylum seekers who submitted a full application in 2024, up from 14% in 2023.

Also in relation to the right to work, according to the information received from CES in 2024, the register of unemployed persons included 38 individuals granted asylum, 7 individuals granted subsidiary protection, 5 family members of people with international protection, and 35 applicants for international protection with the right to work. Additionally, through CES' mediation, in 2024, 56 individuals with asylum, 32 applicants for international protection with the right to work, 9 individuals with subsidiary protection, and 4 family members of people with international protection were employed. Regarding individual counselling activities, in 2024, 74 individuals with asylum, 14 individuals with subsidiary protection, 8 family members of refugees with international protection, and 53 applicants for international protection with the right to work took part. As for active labour market policy measures aimed at facilitating faster and more successful integration into the labour market, 4 persons granted asylum and 16 applicants for international protection with the right to work were included in these measures.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ *Report of the Ombudswoman for 2024*, p. 270 - 271, 4 April 2025, available at: <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/ljudska-prava-u-hrvatskoj-na-ekanju-siroma-tvo-je-u-porastu-besku-nici-i-starije-osobe-najugro-eniji/>

⁹⁹ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

¹⁰⁰ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

¹⁰¹ Data shared by CES with UNHCR in March 2025, on file with CLC.

A total of 15 travel documents ('special passports' for individuals with subsidiary protection¹⁰²) were issued based on the provisions of the AITP.¹⁰³

In 2024, 95 requests for family reunification with beneficiaries of international protections were submitted, up 19% from 80 requests in 2023 (which was itself up 45% on 2022). By the end of 2024, 37 requests were still being processed, 51 had been approved and 7 procedures were suspended. The largest number of requests were submitted by nationals of Syria (53 or 56%), Eritrea (6 or 6%), Iran (6 or 6%) and DR Congo (5 or 5%).¹⁰⁴ This represents a lower approval rate (54%) compared to previous years, with 66 or 83% of requests approved in 2023 (and 78% in 2022).

According to the MLPFSP, a total of 83 individuals granted international protection benefited from the social welfare system in 2024, in accordance with the provisions outlined in the Social Welfare Act. The benefits accessed included the guaranteed minimum allowance, assistance and care allowance, compensation for vulnerable energy consumers, inclusion allowance, one-time financial assistance, and personal disability benefit.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, in 2024, 44 housing entitlement decisions were issued to refugees with international protection, in accordance with Article 67 of the AITP, and as of 31 December, 39 individuals continued to receive these entitlements.¹⁰⁶

5.3 Integration and inclusion – activities at the national and local level

5.3.1. Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities

In 2024, the Government Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities began implementing the SINERGY Project – Ensuring a Synergistic Approach to the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. The project is co-financed by the European Union's Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund. In July 2024, the project's kick-off conference was held, where the project activities were presented.

The main objectives of the project are to reduce administrative barriers in accessing rights and services by providing translation services in the languages most commonly spoken by individuals granted international protection and other third-country nationals; to strengthen the coordination capacities of the integration system by intensifying cooperation with local government units, third-country nationals, and civil society organizations; to increase the awareness of key stakeholders and the general

¹⁰² Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC. Whilst Convention Travel Documents are issued to refugees granted asylum, a special travel document may be issued to a third country national granted subsidiary protection in Croatia, and who, through no fault of their own, is unable to obtain a foreign travel document.

¹⁰³ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC. Convention travel documents are issued to refugees granted asylum, and no data was provided on this for 2024. In 2023, 18 people were issued Convention passports.

¹⁰⁴ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

¹⁰⁵ Data shared by MLPFSP with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

¹⁰⁶ Data shared by MLPFSP with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

public regarding regular migration pathways and the contribution of third-country nationals to societal development, and to improve the process of developing, monitoring, reporting on, and evaluating the impact of integration measures from strategic documents, considering the perspectives of both implementers and beneficiaries.

As part of the project, ten Local Integration Coordinators were appointed across various cities in 2024, in order to support local-level integration; two out of five planned coordinator meetings were held; the first of six planned meetings with civil society and international organizations was held in November; an Advisory Group of ten members from migrant backgrounds was established to influence integration policies, and two of eight planned meetings were held, focusing on employment, healthcare, education, and housing.

5.3.2. The City of Zagreb

The City of Zagreb continued with its Action Plan for the implementation of the Integrating Cities Charter for 2023 and 2024 throughout 2024.

In September 2024, the City of Zagreb and UNHCR Croatia signed a cooperation agreement to open a Welcome Centre (One-stop shop). This is a central point where refugees and foreign workers can receive information about their rights, obligations, and available services in a language they understand. In addition to staff from the City Office for Culture and Civil Society, representatives of the CRC provided daily support at the centre. The centre is located at Petrinjska 31 and operates on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8 AM to 4 PM, and on Tuesdays from 10 AM to 6 PM. Additionally, a space at Petrinjska 73 has been designated for workshops and Croatian language courses conducted by associations funded by the City of Zagreb.

The City of Zagreb co-financed 12 civil society organizations to implement measures and activities from the Action Plan, including translation services, cultural mediation, women's empowerment activities, workshops on Croatian culture and traditions, raising public awareness about integration, and strengthening the capacities of city officials.

A Croatian language course was organized at the SUVAG School of Foreign Languages for applicants for international protection and individuals granted international or temporary protection, among others, with the possibility of taking an exam and obtaining a certificate of Croatian language proficiency. Additionally, six civil society organizations, selected through a Public Call for Expressions of Interest, conducted Croatian language courses as part of the Action Plan implementation. A total of 443 participants attended the free Croatian language course, while 10 individuals passed the certified exam without attending the course.

In 2024, a Public Call was announced for financial support for high school and university students with international or temporary protection. A total of 75 scholarships, each worth €2,000, were to be paid as one-time grants from the City of Zagreb's budget for 2024.

Nine children with international protection and 92 children with temporary protection were enrolled in kindergarten in Zagreb. 35 child applicants for international protection, 46 children with international protection and 274 children with temporary protection were enrolled in elementary school in Zagreb. Five child applicants for international protection, 21 children with international protection and 115 children with temporary protection were enrolled in high school in Zagreb.

The project "Alternative Teaching – Intercultural School Hour" continued in Zagreb's primary and secondary schools. This project, which contributes to reducing prejudices and creating conditions for a fair and inclusive society, was implemented in 49 schools (29 primary and 17 secondary schools) in 2024, involving 1,300 students.

Throughout 2024, the City of Zagreb implemented four EU integration projects: the Cities4Refugees project, funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights, and Values (CERV) program; the UNITES project, funded by the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF), both of which concluded in 2024; the CONSOLIDATE project, conducted in partnership with the EUROCITIES network and funded by AMIF and the Plan Einstein Academy project, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as part of the URBACT program.¹⁰⁷

6. PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN THE ASYLUM SYSTEM

Out of 26,776 persons who expressed the intention to seek international protection, 1,980 were UASC, of which 1,914 were boys and 66 were girls. However, only 19 submitted a full application for international protection, indicating high onwards movement.¹⁰⁸ Compared to 2023, when 1,516 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) were registered, this is an increase of 31%.¹⁰⁹

During 2024, 1,455 unaccompanied children were accommodated in RCAIPs (an increase of 31% compared to 2023), and 487 were placed in social welfare institutions (a 30% increase compared to 2023).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Data shared by City of Zagreb in January 2025, on file with CLC.

¹⁰⁸ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

¹⁰⁹ Ministry of the Interior, *Statistical indicators for applicants for international protection in 2023*, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/statistika/2024/2/web%20statistike%202023%20Q4.xlsx>

¹¹⁰ *Report of the Ombudswoman for Children for 2024*, 1 April 2025, page 199, available at: <https://dijete.hr/hr/izvjesca/izvjesca-o-rad-u-pravobranitelja-za-djecu/>

Given their age and vulnerability, unaccompanied children who go missing from childcare institutions are at great risk of rights violations, including human trafficking, labour exploitation (forced labour, child labour), sexual exploitation and abuse.

According to the MLPFSP, during 2024, CISW Regional Offices appointed special guardians 1,926 times to UASC, including 49 such appointments to girls. This data corresponds to the number of decisions on the appointment or dismissal of special guardians for unaccompanied and separated children made by CISW Regional Offices. The majority of guardian appointments were to children from Syria (in 972 cases, or 50% of appointments), Egypt (399, or 21%), Afghanistan (210, or 11%) and Türkiye (209, or 11%). In terms of age, 1,742 (90%) were aged 14-17.¹¹¹

The MLPFSP also reported that during 2024, 891 unaccompanied children were accommodated in childcare institutions - 212 under the age of 14, and 679 aged 14 and over (see table 3). Five UASC (0.3%) were accommodated in foster homes, while the remaining 54% were placed in a RCAIP or were transferred to other countries in accordance with Mol decisions.¹¹² Most UASC left childcare institutions voluntarily.¹¹³

Table 3. Unaccompanied children accommodated in childcare institutions in 2024

Childcare Institution	Number of UASC 1 January – 31 December 2024	Gender		Age		
		Male	Female	0-13	14-15	16-17
The Dugave Community Service Centre in Zagreb	299	278	21	72	168	59
The Split Community Service Centre	118	116	2	9	24	85
The Osijek Community Service Centre	111	108	3	9	84	18
The Rijeka Community Service Centre	5	4	1	0	1	4
The Pula Community Service Centre	18	18	0	2	8	8

¹¹¹ Data shared by MLPFSP with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

¹¹² This is in line with the low rate of non-institutional placements documented in UNHCR's 2024 report Care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children in Croatia, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/hr/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2024/12/UNHCR-Skrb-o-djeci-bez-pratnje-u-RH.pdf/>

¹¹³ Data shared by MLPFSP with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

The Ivanec Community Service Centre	229	229	0	56	123	50
The Karlovac-Banija Community Service Centre	20	18	2	1	16	3
The Vladimir Nazor Community Service Centre in Karlovac	4	3	1	3	1	0
The Zagreb Community Service Centre	8	8	0	6	2	0
The Klasje Community Service Centre in Osijek	5	4	1	5	0	0
The Sv. Ana Community Service Centre in Vinkovci	8	5	3	3	3	2
The Vrbina Community Service Centre in Sisak	37	36	1	21	15	1
The Kuća sretnih ciglica Community Service Centre	27	24	3	24	2	1
The Maslina Community Service Centre in Dubrovnik	2	2	0	1	1	0
TOTAL	891	853	38	212	448	231

Source: MLPFSP¹¹⁴

According to the Mol, two asylum-seeking UASC were also detained in the RCF, as noted above.

In 2024, the Mol rendered 718 decisions for UASC in the asylum procedure, of which three were rejections and 10 were dismissals, while 704 cases were otherwise closed. There were two appeals to the Administrative Courts.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Data shared by MLPFSP with UNHCR in February 2025, on file with CLC.

¹¹⁵ These figures were presented in the *Report of the Ombudswoman for Children for 2024*, p. 199, 1 April 2025, available at: <https://dijete.hr/hr/izvjesca/izvjesca-o-radu-pravobranitelja-za-djecu/>

During 2024, CRC continued to provide psychosocial support and family tracing services to UASC accommodated in social welfare institutions throughout Croatia and in RCAIPs.¹¹⁶

In 2024, UNHCR published a study by Dr. Drago Župarić Iljić titled “*Care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children in Croatia.*”¹¹⁷ The study analysed the current system of providing protection and care for unaccompanied children in Croatia, by evaluating both institutional and deinstitutionalized solutions for initial reception and subsequent placement. The study’s recommendations pertain to legal, policy and operational measures aimed at:

1. Strengthening the foster family system through training, supervision, support networks, enhanced provision of interpretation, and information campaigns (including good practices from elsewhere) to mobilise foster families and facilitate their hosting unaccompanied and separated children.
2. Further developing community-based solutions within the national child protection system, such as supported independent group living arrangements, for older unaccompanied and separated children.
3. Ending placement of unaccompanied and separated children in institutions that are inadequately equipped to meet their specific needs (i.e. institutions for children and youth with behavioural disorders and/or in contact with the law, as well as reception centres for adults). This may entail developing dedicated centre/s hosting unaccompanied and separated children as an emergency, temporary solution only, pending their placement in family or community-based options.
4. Ongoing assessments of the best interests of the child during their placement – whether institutional or deinstitutionalized ones – and concerted efforts at family reunification.

7. ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Civil society and international organizations continued their work on strengthening the protection system, improving access to rights and services, supporting applicants and persons granted protection, fostering cooperation, raising awareness, and building stakeholder capacity.

Most civil society organizations lack access to RCAIPs in Zagreb and Kutina, while entry to collective accommodation centres for those with temporary protection is granted upon request. In Zagreb, CRC and MdM-BELGIQUE have regular access to the RCAIP, whilst in Kutina CRC has regular presence and MdM-BELGIQUE is present once per week. Other organizations access RCAIPs only for specific events, such as

¹¹⁶ Data shared by the CRC with CLC in January 2025, on file with CLC.

¹¹⁷ The study is available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/hr/28675-unhcr-hrvatska-objavio-studiju-skrb-o-djeci-bez-pratnje-u-republici-hrvatskoj.html>

the meetings of the Coordination Group on Gender-based Violence. Lawyers representing asylum applicants in RSD and court proceedings are granted access to talk to their clients. At the end of 2024, civil society organizations met with MoI officials to discuss access to RCAIPs. Further meetings were suggested to continue discussions and work toward an agreement, as detailed in section 5.1 of the present report.

Civil society organizations assist asylum applicants and people granted international or temporary protection who can reach them via phone, email, or through external activities. However, most organizations report that these individuals have limited awareness of available services. The activities conducted in 2024 by non-governmental and international organizations are summarised below, based on reports delivered to CLC.

During 2024, Are You Syrious (AYS) continued to provide support and assistance as in previous years,¹¹⁸ while also undertaking additional initiatives. They held monthly leisure activities with children seeking and granted international protection (funded by the European Solidarity Corps), and in November 2024, opened a mobile Play Centre at the Travno Cultural Centre where they conduct weekly workshops for children and parents at risk of social exclusion. AYS supported the City of Zagreb's Integration Action Plan through translation, cultural mediation, IT training, and language and cultural workshops.

In 2024, Borders:None implemented a range of projects supporting applicants for international protection, focusing on legal aid, language learning, employment support, mentoring, and digital skills. Job search coaching was tailored to individual needs and included CV workshops and sessions on professional culture and workers' rights. To meet digital needs, they introduced smartphone-based digital literacy courses and continued programming classes to help participants build practical tech skills.

In 2024, CLC continued¹¹⁹ its activities with persons granted international and temporary protection and applicants for international protection and stakeholders in the international and temporary protection system. Activities were mostly in relation to legal assistance and legal representation, monitoring access to the asylum system, strengthening the capacities of stakeholders, trainings and online workshops, and analysis of certain aspects of the international protection system (such as applications for international protection, restriction of movement of applicants for international protection). CLC also produced a study on GBV in the asylum system¹²⁰. Furthermore,

¹¹⁸ See the *National Asylum Report 2023*, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/18/nacionalni-izvjestaj-o-sustavu-azila-za-2023-godinu/>

¹¹⁹ See the *National Asylum Report 2023*, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/18/nacionalni-izvjestaj-o-sustavu-azila-za-2023-godinu/>

¹²⁰ Croatian Law Centre, *Gender-based Violence within the Asylum Procedure - Analysis of the Legal and Policy Framework at the International and National Level in Croatia*, January 2025, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2025/04/04/novi-izvjestaj-rodno-uvjetovano-nasilje-u-postupku-medunarodne-zastite-analiza-pravnog-i-strateskog-okvira-na-medunarodnoj-i-nacionalnoj-razini-u-hrvatskoj/>

CLC delivered training to strengthen the capacity of employees and volunteers of the City of Zagreb's Welcome Centre on communication with forcibly displaced people provision of information and referrals to relevant national and local support mechanisms. Brochure on the right to work of applicants for international protection, persons with granted international protection and persons under temporary protection¹²¹ was published in collaboration with CES and UNHCR.

In addition to the activities the Centre for Peace Studies (CPS) has been carrying out in recent years,¹²² in 2024 they organised a conference to address language barriers between non-Croatian speakers and public service providers, where they presented recommendations for an effective language support model in Croatia. CPS also ran activities related to racism, discrimination and xenophobia in Croatian society, including a series of educational and awareness-raising panels, workshops and cultural activities. They also held two training courses for interpreters, including court and community interpreters. CPS raised concerns with international bodies regarding the denial of international protection for a human rights defender and monitored a case involving the unlawful detention of an applicant for international protection for over six months.¹²³

In 2024, the Croatian Red Cross continued¹²⁴ to carry out numerous activities with applicants for international protection in the RCAIPs in Zagreb and Kutina, as well as activities with people granted temporary protection, with detainees in the RCF and TRCs, and with other stakeholders. Since the opening of the Welcome Centre, they have been supporting Zagreb City officials through capacity-strengthening activities, including delivering training on integration prior to the Centre's opening.

The Centre for Missing and Exploited Children continued¹²⁵ to provide support for persons granted temporary protection. During 2024, they carried out numerous activities aimed at strengthening the guardianship system for unaccompanied children in Croatia (interviews with guardians, meetings with relevant national stakeholders, mapping and identification of gaps in relation to the existing care system) within the project 'GUARD-UP'.

¹²¹ Croatian Law Centre, The Right to Work of Applicants for International Protection, Persons with granted International Protection and Persons under Temporary Protection, 2024, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/08/23/brosura-o-pravu-na-rad-dostupna-i-na-francuskom-turskom-i-farsi-jeziku/>

¹²² See the *National Asylum Report 2023*, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/18/nacionalni-izvjestaj-o-sustavu-azila-za-2023-godinu/>

¹²³ In 2025, the High Administrative Court ruled that the detention was unlawful. Centre for Peace Studies, *The detention of Vladislav Arinichev was unlawful - ruled the High Administrative Court in Zagreb!*, 11 March 2025, available at: <https://www.cms.hr/detencija-vladislava-arinicheva-bila-je-nezakonita-presudio-je-visoki-upravni-sud-u-zagrebu/>

¹²⁴ See the *National Asylum Report 2023*, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/18/nacionalni-izvjestaj-o-sustavu-azila-za-2023-godinu/>

¹²⁵ See the *National Asylum Report 2023*, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/18/nacionalni-izvjestaj-o-sustavu-azila-za-2023-godinu/>

In 2024, Civil Rights Project Sisak continued¹²⁶ to provide legal support to applicants for international protection (counselling and representation) and persons with granted protection and began implementing the project 'DIDI: Two-way and Dynamic Integration' to support the integration of people granted international protection in the Sisak-Moslavina and Karlovac counties, within which workshops and gatherings were held.

The Festival of Tolerance promoted refugee inclusion through a series of activities such as educational programs for schools, workshops, training for journalists, and marking World Refugee Day by creating murals with refugees.

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) continued its ongoing activities from the previous year,¹²⁷ focusing on providing legal aid, supporting family reunification, and assisting with employment for refugees, applicants of international protection and other migrants. Their efforts aim to facilitate smoother integration into Croatian society, ensuring access to essential services.

In 2024, MdM-BELGIQUE continued¹²⁸ to provide medical support to applicants for international protection at the RCAIP in Zagreb and, as needed and when possible, once a week at the RCAIP in Kutina. They also launched the project '6P - Support in Providing Health Care to International Protection Seekers.' MdM-BELGIQUE highlights a significant increase in the number of applicants experiencing mental health disorders, with 64% of these patients being applicants returned under the Dublin Regulation. They note that these applicants are often returned without medical documentation, which delays treatment and disrupts continuity of care.

During 2024, Association Mi carried out numerous activities with persons displaced from Ukraine in the city of Split and its wider surroundings, such as cultural, artistic and educational activities, as well as sports and other recreational activities. They also held workshops on employment, legal counselling sessions organised in cooperation with CLC, and a Croatian language conversation club for adults.

During 2024, the Society for Psychological Assistance (SPA) carried out activities with international protection applicants and persons granted international and temporary protection, such as psychological counselling, creative workshops, training for school staff and teachers working with refugee children, workshops with children, and learning assistance. Their group support workshops for children displaced from Ukraine focused on preventing aggressive behaviour and overcoming fears, and they also held meetings with psychologists working with children displaced from Ukraine.

¹²⁶ See the *National Asylum Report 2023*, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/18/nacionalni-izvjestaj-o-sustavu-azila-za-2023-godinu/>

¹²⁷ See the *National Asylum Report 2023*, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/18/nacionalni-izvjestaj-o-sustavu-azila-za-2023-godinu/>

¹²⁸ See the *National Asylum Report 2023*, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/18/nacionalni-izvjestaj-o-sustavu-azila-za-2023-godinu/>

Association Svoja continued its efforts to support the integration of displaced persons from Ukraine by offering employment assistance, organizing educational conferences, providing training programs, hosting online events, and carrying out various other activities aimed at fostering integration.

In Croatia, UNHCR focuses its activities on five main areas: monitoring the asylum procedure and advocating for access to territory and asylum for people in need of international protection; undertaking capacity building activities to strengthen the asylum procedure; promoting local integration prospects; supporting efforts to prevent and resolve statelessness in Croatia; and promoting positive attitudes towards forcibly displaced and stateless people. In 2024, UNHCR Croatia continued to support and partner with institutions such as the MoI, the MLPFSP, the judiciary, the Offices of the Ombudswoman and the Ombudswoman for Children, CES, the City of Zagreb, educational establishments and civil society organizations.¹²⁹ UNHCR Croatia implemented activities directly, as well as through partners that included CLC, the CRC, Association Mi, Festival of Tolerance, Jesuit Refugee Service and Civil Rights Project Sisak. UNHCR also partnered with the refugee-led NGO Svoja.

UNHCR's 2024 capacity-strengthening activities included convening a training workshop for MoI asylum system actors on interviewing techniques, with a focus on working with children and GBV and trafficking survivors; training CES employment counsellors on working with displaced people; providing training for journalists and communications professionals on advocacy and ethical reporting on refugees; delivering training sessions to future peacekeepers at the Croatian military's UN Comprehensive Protection of Civil Courses, and supporting training of members of the judiciary in the framework of the Council of Europe's 'HELP' course on refugee and migrant children, organised with the Judicial Academy of Croatia. UNHCR also launched a study providing recommendations on strengthening care arrangements for UASC¹³⁰ and conducted joint visits to children's homes with the Office of the Ombudswoman for children. UNHCR supported the City of Zagreb to open, in September, Croatia's first welcome centre, or 'one-stop shop,' for asylum seekers, refugees, and foreign workers, including through training its staff and partner organisations, within the framework of the City's local integration action plan and a Cooperation Agreement signed with the City. UNHCR held its annual Participatory Assessment with Ukrainian refugees through six focus groups nationwide, in order to inform its programming and advocacy on inclusion. UNHCR also supported two editions of the Festival of Tolerance, in Zagreb in January and in Zadar in September, to foster empathy and humanise the refugee experience, and the Festival of Tolerance also held 34 exhibitions, community events and other public activities throughout 2024,

¹²⁹ See the *National Asylum Report 2023*, available at: <https://www.hpc.hr/2024/07/18/nacionalni-izvjestaj-o-sustavu-azila-za-2023-godinu/>

¹³⁰ UNHCR Croatia, *Care Arrangements for Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Croatia*, 2024, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/hr/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2024/12/UNHCR-Skrb-o-djeci-bez-pratnje-u-RH.pdf>

as well as civics education programmes and trainings reaching almost 1,290 children. UNHCR and the MoI continued to co-convene the Coordination Group on GBV in reception settings, in order to strengthen prevention of, and response to, GBV, with four meetings in 2024.

As part of the 'Support for Children and Families in Migration' program, UNICEF carried out activities in relation to guardianship and protection of unaccompanied children, and mental health and psychosocial support for vulnerable children, adolescents, parents and refugee caregivers. The program also promoted migrant children's integration into schools and communities while ensuring timely access to early childhood development services. Some activities were held at the Dugave Community Service Centre in Zagreb, where an intercultural mediator was also employed. Key initiatives included the development of an online training program for education professionals through 'PREMISE: A Program for Inclusive, Supportive, and Equitable Education for Migrants,' and the creation of an online professional development program on 'Providing Culturally Sensitive Early Childhood Intervention Services for Migrant Children and Families.' UNICEF also enabled the development of standardized tests for assessing the Croatian language proficiency of non-native-speaker students. Activities related to persons displaced from Ukraine primarily focused on strengthening the capacities of professionals in the social welfare system, Interior Ministry, Civil Protection Directorate, and civil society organizations. Additionally, the following reports and materials were developed: a *National Analytical Assessment Report and Recommendations on Strengthening National Capacities for Enhanced Protection of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) from Ukraine*,¹³¹ and a university textbook entitled *Legal Protection of Unaccompanied Children in Croatia – Experiences in Caring for Children from Ukraine*.¹³²

¹³¹ UNICEF, *National Analytical Assessment Report and Recommendations on Strengthening National Capacities for Enhanced Protection of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) from Ukraine*, June 2024, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/36821/file/Nacionalna%20analiticka%20procjena%20-%20zavrs%CC%8Cno%20izvjesce%20ENGL%5b14%5d.pdf.pdf>

¹³² UNICEF, *Legal Protection of Unaccompanied Children in Croatia – Experiences in Caring for Children from Ukraine*, October 2024, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/croatia/izvjesca/pravna-zastita-djece-bez-pratnje-u-hrvatskoj>

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Centre for Peace Studies – CPS

Croatian Employment Service – CES

Croatian Institute for Social Work – CISW

Croatian Law Centre – CLC

Croatian Red Cross – CRC

Jesuit Refugee Service – JRS

Member State – MS

Médecins du Monde Belgique – MdM-BELGIQUE

Ministry of the Interior – Mol

Ministry of Labour, Pension, Family and Social Policy – MLPFSP

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR

European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum – EU Pact

Reception Centres for Applicants for International Protection - RCAIP

Reception Centre for Foreigners – RCF

Refugee Status Determination – RSD

Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 for establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person – Dublin Regulation

Service for the Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection – SRA

Transit Reception Centre – TRC

The United Nations Children’s Fund – UNICEF

Unaccompanied and separated children – UASC