

The Croatian Asylum System In 2025 - National Report

Contents

About Us & Acknowledgments	2
1 2025 IN FOCUS - THE ASYLUM LANDSCAPE IN CROATIA	3
2 DEVELOPMENTS IN TEMPORARY PROTECTION FOR PERSONS DISPLACED FROM UKRAINE	4
3 DEVELOPMENTS IN ASYLUM AND MIGRATION LEGISLATION AND POLICY 8	
3.1. Developments at EU level	8
3.1.1. Policy development.....	8
3.1.2. Legislative changes	10
3.1.3. Other developments	11
3.2. Legislation and policies in Croatia	13
3.2.1. Policy documents	13
3.2.2. Legislative changes	15
3.2.3. Institutional developments	17
4 ASYLUM IN PRACTICE: ACCESS TO THE ASYLUM SYSTEM AND REFUGEE STATUS DETERMINATION	18
4.1. Expressions of intention and applications for international protection.....	18
4.2. The Dublin procedure	21
4.3. Restriction of freedom of movement.....	23
4.4. Refugee status determination (RSD) procedure	26
5 ASYLUM IN PRACTICE: ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND SERVICES FOR APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION	30
5.1. Reception conditions	30
5.2. Access to rights and services for applicants for international protection	32
6 INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION – ACTIVITIES AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL	33
6.1. Access to rights and services for persons under international protection	33
6.2. Coordinative activities - Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities	36
6.3. Local integration measures - City of Zagreb	37
7 ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS.....	40

About Us & Acknowledgments

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 (UNHCR) in Croatia. CLC systematically monitors legislation and its practical implementation in the field of asylum, serving as the basis for our annual national reports published since 2010. All previous reports are available on the CLC website.¹

This Report provides an overview of the key developments, statistical trends, and challenges within the asylum system during 2025. It was prepared within the project Legal Assistance and Capacity Building on Access to Territory in Croatia, funded by UNHCR. The findings are based on publicly available information, as well as data provided to CLC by various public bodies, international organizations, and civil society organizations, including information shared by the Ministry of the Interior with UNHCR.

CLC wishes to express its gratitude to UNHCR for its long-standing support and to all institutions and organizations that contributed data, making the preparation of this Report possible.

CLC holds sole responsibility for the content of this Report.

¹ <https://www.hpc.hr/category/publikacije/>

1 2025 IN FOCUS - THE ASYLUM LANDSCAPE IN CROATIA

The year 2025 was marked by important developments in Croatia's asylum and migration system, particularly in the areas of legislation, institutional organisation, and continued alignment with the evolving European Union (EU) framework. At the same time, statistical data indicate a marked decrease in the number of persons expressing the intention to apply for international protection, which fell by 44% compared with the previous year.

Among the most significant developments were amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection (LITP), which entered into force in February 2025. These amendments primarily regulated the extension of temporary protection until 4 March 2026 and repealed the previous three-year limitation on its duration. They also introduced the legal basis for national strategic planning in line with Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 on asylum and migration management. This provided the basis for the adoption in October 2025 of the Migration and Asylum Management Plan of the Republic of Croatia for the Period up to 2030, together with its accompanying Action Plan until 2027. The framework envisages, among other measures, increased human resources, improved identification of vulnerable groups, and further development of the integration system.

Legislative alignment with the EU framework continued towards the end of the year, when the Ministry of the Interior (MoI) launched a public consultation on further amendments to the LITP. Their adoption and entry into force are expected in 2026.

The reporting period was also marked by institutional restructuring within the MoI. In June 2025, the Sector for International Protection was established as a dedicated organisational unit comprising specialised services and departments for procedures, integration, reception, and Dublin-related affairs. This represented a notable development in the organisation of asylum-related responsibilities.

At the same time, significant challenges remained in the area of integration, particularly with regard to Croatian language learning, housing, and access to healthcare. Nevertheless, cooperation between national authorities, local government units, and civil society organisations continued, while a range of initiatives and projects at national and local level reflected ongoing efforts to support social cohesion and the longer-term inclusion of displaced persons in Croatian society.

2 DEVELOPMENTS IN TEMPORARY PROTECTION FOR PERSONS DISPLACED FROM UKRAINE



• 3,532 new applications for temporary protection were submitted in 2025, with 3,181 persons granted protection regardless of the year of application.



• Temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine was extended until 4 March 2026.



• The previous three-year limit on temporary protection was repealed in February 2025.



• Time spent under temporary protection was allowed to count toward long-term residence, but this provision was later proposed for deletion.



• Access to employment remained unrestricted, although language barriers continued to limit labour market integration.

Following the Council's Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1836 of 25 June 2024 extending temporary protection as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382,² the Croatian Government adopted the Decision on the Extension of Temporary Protection in the Republic of Croatia for Displaced Persons from Ukraine on 27 February 2025, extending this status to 4 March 2026.³

In conjunction with the extension of temporary protection, the Croatian Government also amended the Decision on Financing Housing Costs for Displaced Persons from Ukraine in Private Accommodation, so Croatia continued its model of financing housing costs for displaced persons from Ukraine residing in private accommodation as this amendment enabled the extension of lease contracts until 4 March 2026.⁴

However, the extension of temporary protection until March 4, 2026, was precluded by Article 79 of the LIPT, which limited its duration to three years. Following a legislative amendment of LIPT that entered into force in February 2025, this three-year restriction has been repealed.

The news about the extension was announced on the website *Croatia for Ukraine*, stating that temporary protection status is automatically extended. However, to validate the extension of identity cards for foreign nationals under temporary protection, individuals were required to report

² 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/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32024D1836>

³ Croatian Government, Decision on the Extension of Temporary Protection in the Republic of Croatia for Displaced Persons from Ukraine, 27 February 2025, available at: <https://hrvatskazaukrajinu.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/HR/odluke/Odluka%20o%20produljenju%20PZ%20do%202026.pdf>

⁴ Decision on Amendments to the Decision on Financing Housing Costs for Displaced Persons from Ukraine in Private Accommodation, Official Gazette 37/22, 33/23, 40/24, 35/25, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_02_35_416.html

in person to the competent Police Administration or Police Station based on the individual's place of residence, by May 30, 2025.⁵

In March 2025, amendments to the Law on Foreigners came into force, and allowed the time spent under temporary protection to be counted, in certain cases, toward the period required for the granting of long-term residence. Specifically, it was stipulated that for a third-country national granted temporary protection, the duration of that protection in Croatia would be included in the time required for long-term residence, provided that the individual holds a valid temporary stay, asylum, or subsidiary protection at the time of application for a long-term residence.⁶ However, in December 2025, a public consultation process was initiated regarding further amendments to the Law on Foreigners, in which the deletion of this provision was proposed. The explanation for the amendment to the Law on Foreigners refers to the Solidarity Platform Ukraine meeting held in Brussels on 27 March 2025 and organised by the European Commission. At that meeting, it was emphasised that the Legal Service of the Council of the EU had clarified that periods of residence under temporary protection cannot be counted towards the five years of residence required for long-term resident status. This applies even in cases where the individual subsequently regularizes a residence status that falls within the scope of the Directive 2003/109/EC concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents. Following the aforementioned opinion, the Croatian Government stated that, through these amendments to the Law on Foreigners, the provision stipulating that temporary protection counts toward the period required for the granting of long-term residence must be deleted

The Ministry of Science, Education and Youth also adopted a series of decisions in 2025 aimed at facilitating the integration of displaced Ukrainian students for the 2025/2026 school year, including: Decision on the enrolment of displaced students into the first grade of secondary school⁷; Decision on financing textbooks for secondary schools and other educational materials for elementary and secondary school students⁸; Decision on co-financing out-of-classroom activities for elementary and secondary school students⁹; Decision on criteria for co-financing accommodation and Meals in student dormitories¹⁰; Decision on co-financing programs for

⁵ Ministry of the Interior: Extension of Temporary Protection Status for Displaced Persons from Ukraine until March 4, 2026, available at: <https://hrvatskazukrajinu.gov.hr/press/status-privremene-zastite-raseljenim-osobama-iz-ukrajine-produzen-do-4-ozujka-2026-godine/660#:~:text=Status%20privremene%20za%20A1tite%20raseljenim%20osobama%20iz%20Ukrajine%20p%20rodu%20C5%BEen%20do%204.%20o%20C5%BEujka%202026.%20godine>

⁶ Article 151 paragraph 5, Law on Foreigners

⁷ Ministry of Science, Education and Youth: Decision on the Enrolment of Displaced Students with temporary protection status from Ukraine into the first grade of secondary school for the 2025/2026 school year, available at: <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/odluka-o-upisu-raseljenih-ucenika-u-statusu-osoba-pod-privremenom-zastitom-iz-ukrajine-u-1-razred-srednje-skole-u-sk-god-2025-2026.pdf>

⁸ Ministry of Science, Education and Youth: Decision on Financing Textbooks for secondary schools and other educational materials for elementary and secondary school students displaced from Ukraine for the 2025/2026 school year, available at: <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/odluka-o-financiranju-udzbenika-za-ss-i-dom-za-osnovne-i-srednje-skole--ucenici-iz-ukrajine-2025-2026.pdf>

⁹ Ministry of Science, Education and Youth: Decision on Co-Financing Out-of-classroom Activities for elementary and secondary school students displaced from Ukraine for the 2025/2026 school year, available at: <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/Odluke-2025-2026/odluka-o-sufinanciranju-izvanucionicke-nastave-za-os-ss-iz-ukrajine-2025-2026.pdf>

¹⁰ Ministry of Science, Education and Youth: Decision on Criteria for Co-Financing Accommodation and Meals in student dormitories for students displaced from Ukraine for the 2025/2026 school year, available at: <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izbjeglice/Odluke-2025-2026/odluka-o-kriterijima-za-sufinanciranje-smjestaja-prehrane-ud-za-ucenike-iz-ukrajine-2025-2026.pdf>

additional support for elementary and secondary school students¹¹; and Decision on co-financing the parental share of costs for extended school stay programs and meals for elementary school students.¹²

According to data of the MoI (see Table 1),¹³ 3,532 new applications for temporary protection were submitted between 1 January and 31 December 2025, out of which 1,288 were submitted by men (36,47%), 1,484 by women (42,02%) and 760 by children (21,51%). Out of this total number, in 2025, temporary protection was approved for 3,054 persons (see Table 2).

Regardless of the date of application, in 2025 temporary protection was granted to 3,181 persons altogether, of which 1,124 men (35,33%), 1,349 women (42,41%) and 708 children (22,26%).

Table 1. Overview of temporary protection applications submitted in 2025, by category of applicants

Applications for temporary protection submitted in 2025 – categories	Total
Nationals of Ukraine – left Ukraine after 24 Feb 2022	3,427
Nationals of Ukraine – left Ukraine before 24 Feb 2022	73
Family members of Ukrainian nationals	16
Family members of Ukrainian nationals – left Ukraine before 24 Feb 2022	1
Third country nationals with permanent residence in Ukraine	14
Third country nationals granted international protection in Ukraine	1

Source: MoI¹⁴

Table 2. Overview of temporary protection applications submitted and approved in 2025, by category of applicants

Applications for temporary protection submitted and approved in 2025 – categories	Total:
Nationals of Ukraine – left Ukraine after 24 Feb 2022	2,981
Nationals of Ukraine – left Ukraine before 24 Feb 2022	56
Family members of Ukrainian nationals	9
Family members of Ukrainian nationals – left Ukraine before 24 Feb 2022	1
Third country nationals with permanent residency in Ukraine	6
Third country nationals granted international protection in Ukraine	1

Source: MoI¹⁵

¹¹ Ministry of Science, Education and Youth: Decision on Co-Financing Programs for Additional Support for elementary and secondary school students displaced from Ukraine for the 2025/20.26 school year, available at: <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izbjerglice/Odluke-2025-2026/odluka-o-sufinanciranju-programa-dodatne-potpore-ucenicima-os-ss-iz-ukrajine-2025-2026.pdf>

¹² Ministry of Science, Education and Youth: Decision on Co-financing the Parental Share of Costs for extended school stay programs and meals for elementary school students displaced from Ukraine for the 2025/2026 school year, available at: <https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izbjerglice/Odluke-2025-2026/odluka-o-sufinanciranju-roditeljskog-udjela-ucenicima-os-raseljenima-iz-ukrajine-2025-2026.pdf>

¹³ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC.

¹⁴ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC.

¹⁵ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC.

As of 31 December 2025, 28,431 people who were granted temporary protection in Croatia had a registered address in Croatia. According to the MoI, this does not necessarily imply that all registered individuals were physically present in Croatia.

In 2025, a total of 13,152 displaced persons from Ukraine completed the identity card validation process related to the extension of temporary protection; of these, 5,015 were men and 8,137 were women. Furthermore, MoI records show the cancellation of 84 temporary protection ID cards cited as 'status annulment' and 105 cards categorized under 'departure from Croatia.

According to the LITP, an individual granted temporary protection can work in Croatia without a stay and work permit or a certificate of registration of work.¹⁶ In addition, persons under temporary protection and their family members can register with the Croatian Employment Service (CES) and under the Law on Labour Market (LLM)¹⁷, they have the same rights and duties as Croatian citizens.¹⁸

On 31 December 2025, 443 persons granted temporary protection were registered in the records of the CES, of which 343 women. Of the total number of registered individuals, 45% have no formal education or have completed primary school, 34% have a secondary education, and 21% hold a university degree or a higher level of education.

According to information from the CES, displaced persons from Ukraine face several challenges during the job search process, such as language barriers and regulated professions, which can prevent some from meeting the requirements to work in their specific fields. Despite these challenges, the CES reported that, based on all statistical indicators, persons under temporary protection have been successfully employed.

Over the past years, persons under temporary protection have been included in education and training programs via the voucher system. These individuals can apply under the same conditions as Croatian citizens, provided they have a sufficient command of Croatian or English to follow the educational program and have completed the process of recognition of foreign educational qualifications. The language barrier has been recognized as a significant obstacle to finding employment. The Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy has initiated the development and funding of Croatian language learning programs. These programs include short educational courses in Croatian across several key sectors, including construction, tourism and hospitality, retail and services, and the manufacturing and food industries. This language learning program is integrated into the education voucher system for both employed and unemployed persons. Applications for Croatian as a foreign language programs, conducted by providers approved by the Ministry, can be submitted, among others, by foreign nationals under temporary protection.

In 2025, the CES conducted 1170 individual consultations with 832 persons granted temporary protection, while 124 persons were included in active employment policy measures. Furthermore, through the CES support, 538 persons granted temporary protection were employed in 2025, of which 409 were women. According to CES, most Ukrainian citizens are employed in

¹⁶ Article 86 paragraph 1, Law on International and Temporary Protection

¹⁷ Official Gazette 118/2018, 32/2020, 18/2022, 156/2023, 152/2024

¹⁸ Article 14 paragraph 1 Law on Labour Market

the activities of preparation and serving of food and beverages (hospitality and tourism), maintenance of business (tourist) facilities, sales, manufacturing activities and administration. The highest number of job placements made through the CES was in the following occupations: cleaner, housekeeper, production line worker, assistant server, assistant cook, kitchen hand, server, cook and sales assistant.

As of December 31, 2025, the CES recorded inquiries from 527 employers who expressed interest in hiring Ukrainian citizens.¹⁹





3 DEVELOPMENTS IN ASYLUM AND MIGRATION LEGISLATION AND POLICY

3.1. Developments at EU level

During 2025, the field of asylum and migration in the EU was marked by intensive preparations for the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum in June 2026, as well as by new legislative initiatives aimed at more effective returns and strengthening the external dimension of migration.

The topics highlighted in this chapter were selected based on their importance for the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and their impact on Member States. Priority was given to developments that will shape the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, as these represent the most significant shifts in the EU's legal and operational framework for the coming period.

3.1.1. Policy development

-  • 22 of 27 EU Member States submitted national migration and asylum strategies by the June 2025 deadline; Croatia notified a delay.
-  • Croatia's Minister of Interior joined 19 EU counterparts in signing a December 2025 letter calling for stronger third-country cooperation, return hubs, and safe third country arrangements.
-  • The EU extended temporary protection for displaced Ukrainians for a fifth consecutive year, until 4 March 2027.
-  • A September 2025 Council Recommendation signals a policy shift toward coordinated exit from temporary protection and transition to national residence statuses.

Following the legal deadline of 12 June 2025, 22 Member States finalised their national migration and asylum strategies which reflect a comprehensive, whole-of-government, strategic

¹⁹ Information provided by the Croatian Employment, 10 February 2026.

approach to migration and asylum, however Croatia was not among those member states and notified delays.²⁰

In December 2025, 19 EU ministers responsible for migration and foreign affairs, including Croatian Minister of Interior, signed a joint letter and called for a new and more innovative approach to migration management, with a strong focus on cooperation with third countries along migration routes. They emphasized addressing the root causes of irregular migration, strengthening asylum and return systems, combating human smuggling and trafficking, and developing innovative solutions such as safe third country arrangements and return hubs. The ministers urged the European Commission to ensure adequate funding, adapt the legal framework where necessary, and reinforce the role of EU agencies and international organizations in implementing these measures.²¹

In regard to temporary protection, in June 2025, Council of the EU extended the temporary protection for a fifth year, until 4 March 2027.²²

In September 2025, the Council of the EU adopted a recommendation on the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine.²³

This policy shift focuses on transition toward other legal residence statuses i.e. the recommendation specifies that it is necessary to prepare a sustainable and well-coordinated gradual exit from that status for the time when conditions in Ukraine allow to end temporary protection, while taking into account Ukraine's capacities and its reconstruction needs as well as gradual transition to other residence statuses for those eligible. Many people displaced from Ukraine who benefit from temporary protection have already integrated into the societies of their host countries, so when possible, under national law or administrative practice, Member States should allow those persons to transition to national legal statuses that better reflect their current situation in the EU, provided that the conditions for continuing lawful residence on other grounds are fulfilled. The recommendation also contains measures to ensure information provision to displaced persons and measures to ensure coordination, monitoring and exchange of information among member states and Ukraine.

²⁰ Annex to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the European Annual Asylum and Migration Report (2025), available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:f449c5d6-bf11-11f0-a612-01aa75ed71a1.0001.01/DOC_2&format=DOC

²¹ Joint follow-up letter from the undersigned ministers on the operationalisation of new and innovative solutions to counter and prevent irregular migration to Europe, available at: <https://berthub.eu/tkconv/document.html?nummer=2025D52678>

²² Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/1460 of 15 July 2025 extending the temporary protection introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2025/1460/oj

²³ Council Recommendation of 16 September 2025 on a coordinated approach to the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine, available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202505129

3.1.2. Legislative changes



- The European Commission proposed a new return regulation in March 2025 to streamline and accelerate forced removal procedures.



- A May 2025 Commission proposal would allow but not require, Member States to apply the safe third country concept based on connection, transit, or arrangement with safe third countries, excluding unaccompanied minors from the arrangement-based option



- In December 2025, the Council and Parliament agreed on an EU list of safe countries of origin, designating Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, Kosovo, India, Morocco, and Tunisia.

In March, the European Commission put forward a new legislative proposal for a regulation establishing a common European system for return which is an important complement to the other proposals in the Pact, in order to ensure that returns are carried out more quickly, simply and effectively.²⁴

In April the European Commission also proposed a EU list of safe countries of origin²⁵, and in May, a revision of the rules on the application of the “safe third country” concept²⁶, fulfilling the requirement under the Pact to review the application of the concept by June 2025.

Regulation 2024/1348 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU provides, for the first time, for the possibility of designating safe countries of origin at the European Union level. The Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the establishment of a list of safe countries of origin at Union level seeks to designate the candidate countries and one potential candidate country for EU membership, as well as six other countries, as safe countries of origin at the Union level. As stated in the proposal given that in Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, India, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as in Kosovo, a potential candidate for EU membership, there is no risk of persecution or serious harm within the meaning of Regulation 2024/1347, as evidenced by the very low recognition rates, those third countries may be designated as safe countries of origin. In December 2025, Council and Parliament reached an agreement on

²⁴ Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union, and repealing Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and the Council, Council Directive 2001/40/EC and Council Decision 2004/191/EC, COM(2025) 101 final, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025PC0101>

²⁵ Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the establishment of a list of safe countries of origin at Union level COM(2025) 186 final, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025PC0186>

²⁶ Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the application of the ‘safe third country’ concept, COM(2025) 259 final, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025PC0259>

the proposed list, which includes Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, Kosovo, India, Morocco and Tunisia.²⁷

Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 as regards the application of the *safe third country* concept would allow, but not require, Member States to apply the *safe third country* concept when (i) there is a connection between the applicant and a safe third country in question, or (ii) where the applicant has transited through a safe third country, or (iii) in case of no connection or transit, when there is an agreement or arrangement with a safe third country requiring the examination of the merits of the requests for effective protection made by applicants subject to that agreement or arrangement. The last option should not apply to unaccompanied minors, for which connection or transit would always be required.

3.1.3. Other developments



• The European Commission launched the first Annual Migration Management Cycle under the Pact in November 2025.



• Croatia accounted for 76% of all Western Balkan route arrivals and ranked second-highest in the EU for irregular entries relative to GDP and population.



• The Croatia–Germany axis was identified as one of primary route for unauthorised secondary movements within the EU.



• Croatia ranks third in the EU for return orders issued relative to GDP and population.



• Croatia was identified as both at risk of migratory pressure and facing a significant migratory situation under Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2323.

In November 2025, with one month of delay the European Commission has launched the first Annual Migration Management Cycle, a mechanism established by the Pact on Migration and Asylum to assess asylum, migration, and reception in the EU each year. It identifies trends, monitors pressures on Member States, and provides a basis for coordinated support. The Annual Migration Management Cycle included three main documents: the European Annual Asylum and

²⁷ Council of the European Union: Asylum policy: Council and European Parliament agree on EU list of safe countries of origin, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/12/18/asylum-policy-council-and-european-parliament-agree-on-eu-list-of-safe-countries-of-origin/>

Migration Report, a Commission decision on Member States' migratory situations, and a proposal for the Annual Solidarity Pool.²⁸

The 2025 European Annual Asylum and Migration Report (2025 Report) analyses the asylum, migration and reception situation in the Union and in the Member States over the previous 12-month period and establishes a projection of the migratory trends for the coming year.²⁹ As stated in the 2025 Report, Member States are advancing in the preparations to implement the reforms of the Pact and to fulfil the new obligations on solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility.

The 2025 Report highlights that while irregular crossings on the Western Balkan route have generally decreased, the corridor through Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia remained the most active, however there were fewer illegal border crossings than in the period from July 2023 to June 2024. Croatia accounted for 76% of all arrivals i.e. over 12,000 irregular crossings. Relative to its GDP and population, this represents the second-highest number of irregular crossings in the EU. Between July 2024 and June 2025, more than 110,000 persons were denied entry at the EU's external borders, primarily at land (55%) and air (41%) borders. Croatia, alongside Poland, France, and Romania, recorded the highest figures in absolute terms, while Croatia, Latvia, and Estonia saw the highest number of refusals relative to their GDP and population.

Regarding unauthorized movements and the Dublin System, while unauthorized (secondary) movements within the EU decreased by approximately 25% compared to the previous reporting period (July 2023 – June 2024), they continue to place a significant burden on the asylum and reception systems of Member States. Under the Dublin III Regulation, applicants are not permitted to choose the Member State responsible for their claim, yet secondary movements persist, primarily from countries of first entry toward north-western Europe. In absolute terms, Croatia was identified as one of the main countries of departure for unauthorized movements, alongside Greece, Germany, Italy, and France. The movement from Croatia to Germany was highlighted as one of the primary axes of unauthorized movement within the EU. In addition, when supplementing Eurodac data with Dublin Regulation statistics, Croatia was ranked among the Member States most affected by these movements relative to its GDP and population, along with Slovenia, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, and Austria.

The 2025 Report also noted that Croatia is among the Member States facing challenges in ensuring sufficient reception capacity. Croatia remains under significant strain regarding its return system, ranking third in the EU (after Cyprus and Greece) for the number of return orders issued relative to its GDP and population.

Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2323 of 11 November 2025 pursuant to Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council³⁰

²⁸ European Commission: Commission launches first Annual Migration Management Cycle under the Pact on Migration and Asylum, available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-launches-first-annual-migration-management-cycle-under-pact-migration-and-asylum-2025-11-12_en

²⁹ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL; The European Annual Asylum and Migration Report (2025), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025DC0795>

³⁰ Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2323 of 11 November 2025 pursuant to Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council, available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2025/2323/oj/eng

determines the Member States under migratory pressure, at risk of migratory pressure, or facing a significant migratory situation. This determination is based on an assessment covering the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 for migratory pressure and risk, and the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2025 for the cumulative effect regarding a significant migratory situation. The decision identifies Greece, Spain, Italy and Cyprus as member states under migratory pressure; Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, France, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Poland and Finland as member states at risk of migratory pressure; and Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Austria and Poland as member states facing a significant migratory situation.

3.2. Legislation and policies in Croatia

3.2.1. Policy documents



- Croatia adopted the Migration and Asylum Management Plan for the Period up to 2030 and an Action Plan until 2027 in October 2025.



- Action Plans on Human Rights Protection and Combating Discrimination address educational inclusion of children seeking international protection, training of reception and protection officials, and anti-discrimination measures for economic integration.



- The National Plan for Prevention of Violence against Women until 2029 explicitly recognises migrant women and female applicants for international protection as a target group and mandates gender-disaggregated data collection on applications for international protection, approvals and rejections.

At the policy level, several documents important to the field of asylum and migration have been adopted in Croatia in the course of 2025. The most important is the Migration and Asylum Management Plan of the Republic of Croatia for the Period up to 2030³¹ and the accompanying Implementation Action Plan for the Period until 2027³² that were adopted in October.³³

The main objectives of the Migration and Asylum Management Plan are to: ensure an efficient and fair system of international protection and reception by increasing human resources and aligning the national legislative framework with EU standards; improve the identification of vulnerable groups; accelerate procedures for granting international protection; strengthen the integration system for persons granted international protection; ensure sustainable migration

³¹ Migration and Asylum Management Plan of the Republic of Croatia for the Period up to 2030, available at: https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//2016/Sjednice/2025/Listopad/123_sjednica_VRH//123%20-%204%20Plan_upravljanja.docx

³² Action Plan for the Implementation of the Migration and Asylum Management Plan of the Republic of Croatia for the Period until 2027, available at: https://vlada.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//2016/Sjednice/2025/Listopad/123_sjednica_VRH//123%20-%204%20Akcijski_plan.docx

³³ Decision on the Adoption of the Migration and Asylum Management Plan of the Republic of Croatia for the Period up to 2030 and the Implementation Action Plan for the Period until 2027, Official Gazette 132/2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_10_132_1932.html

management and prevent irregular movements through effective external border monitoring and cooperation with neighbouring third countries to prevent illegal migration; strengthen the return system for persons who do not have the right to reside in the Republic of Croatia; and promote legal and safe migration pathways and proactively involve Croatia in EU solidarity mechanisms.

The Migration and Asylum Management Plan is implemented through an Action Plan. This first Action Plan covers the period until 2027 and includes priority measures, while the remaining activities will be addressed in the next Action Plan (2028–2030). The Action Plan contains a total of 36 measures, of which 26 are planned to be implemented under the 2027 Action Plan, and 10 in the subsequent Action Plan. The MoI is the main body responsible for implementing most activities under the Action Plan, while other responsible institutions include: the Ministry of Justice, Administration and Digital Transformation; the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and State Property; and the CES.

In February, the Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2025³⁴ and the Action Plan for Combating Discrimination for 2025³⁵ were adopted.³⁶ The Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2025 foresees the educational inclusion of children seeking international protection and the professionalization and trainings for officials of the Service for International Protection and the Service for the Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection, as well as for police officers in the field of human rights protection. The Action Plan for Combating Discrimination for 2025 focuses, among others, on the economic integration of protected persons by specifically including applicants for international protection and persons under international protection in training programs for the business sector on how to eliminate prejudices and prevent discrimination in the workplace.

In December, the government adopted the National Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for period until 2029 (hereinafter: National Plan)³⁷ and its accompanying Action Plan (until 2026)³⁸, and both documents entered into force the same month.³⁹

³⁴ Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2025, available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Akcijski%20plan%20za%C5%A1tite%20i%20promicanja%20ljudskih%20prava%20za%202025.%20godinu.pdf>

³⁵ Action Plan for Combating Discrimination for 2025, available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Akcijski%20plan%20suzbijanja%20diskriminacija%20za%202025.%20godinu.pdf>

³⁶ Decision on the Adoption of the Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights for 2025 and the Action Plan for Combating Discrimination for 2025, Official Gazette 31/2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/full/2025_02_31_329.html

³⁷ National Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for period until 2029 available at:

<https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Strategije/Nacionalni%20plan%20za%C5%A1tite%20od%20nasilja%20nad%20%C5%BEenama%20i%20nasilja%20u%20obitelji%20do%202029.pdf>

³⁸ Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period until the end of 2026, available at: <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Socijalna%20politika/Strategije/Akcijski%20plan%20za%20provedbu%20nacionalnog%20plana%20za%C5%A1tite%20od%20nasilja%20nad%20%C5%BEenama%20i%20nasilja%20u%20obitelji%20do%20kraja%202026.pdf>

³⁹ Decision on the Adoption of the National Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for the period up to 2029 and the Implementation Action Plan for the period until the end of 2026, Official Gazette 156/2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_12_156_2349.html

The National Plan sets strategic objectives to enhance the safety of women and other victims through prevention, improved interagency cooperation, effective interventions, staff training, and strengthened legislation. Its three main goals are to: prevent violence against women and domestic violence; improve protection and support for victims, enhance effectiveness of interventions against perpetrators. Both the National Plan and the accompanying Action Plan recognize migrant women and women applicants for international protection who are victims of gender-based violence and emphasize the need for continuous training for staff. They also foresee improvements in the collection of statistical data on submitted, approved, and rejected applications for international protection, taking into account the gender-specific nature of violence, to ensure the necessary foundations for the further development of services and procedural practices.

3.2.2. Legislative changes



• 2025 brought a wave of legislative changes: LITP amendments (February), Law on Foreigners amendments (March), ordinance on accommodation cost-sharing for persons under international and temporary protection (May), amended ordinance on treatment of third-country nationals (July), and amended ordinance on state scholarship eligibility (October).



• A December 2025 public consultation launched further Pact-alignment amendments to the LITP.

Regarding the legislative changes related to the area of asylum, in February 2025, the amendments to the LITP entered into force.⁴⁰ The amendments regulate the duration of temporary protection in the Republic of Croatia until 4 March 2026. In addition, with regard to the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 on the management of asylum and migration, the amendments also provide for the drafting and adoption of a national strategic planning act, its content, the authority responsible for adopting the act, and the deadline for its adoption (the Migration and Asylum Management Plan of the Republic of Croatia for the Period up to 2030).

However, at the end of 2025, the MoI launched a public consultation with the aim to further amend the LITP and align it with the new European Union legal framework.

The proposal for amendments to the LITP covers several areas. It aligns procedural rules with Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 by providing clearer rules on accelerated and border procedures, the handling of inadmissible and subsequent applications, the determination of competent authorities, decision-making deadlines, and procedural guarantees. It also aligns the national framework with Regulation (EU) 2024/1351, which establishes common rules on determining the responsible Member State, implementing the solidarity mechanism, managing migration flows, and preventing secondary movements. In addition, the proposal reflects Regulation (EU) 2024/1347, which strengthens and harmonises the criteria for granting international protection and promotes greater convergence in asylum practices. The draft law also provides for a more effective

⁴⁰ Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection, Official Gazette 17/2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_02_17_161.html

assessment of whether protection is available in safe parts of the country of origin. In such cases, international protection will not be granted. It further regulates the cessation of international protection in cases where the person concerned poses a serious threat to society or security. It also requires account to be taken of updated European Union Agency for Asylum guidelines on countries of origin. The proposal also links the social rights of beneficiaries of international protection to their active participation in mandatory integration programmes. Finally, it aligns national rules with the new framework on data collection, processing, and exchange, including access to and use of the Eurodac system under Regulation (EU) 2024/1350. These rules are intended to facilitate the identification of persons, monitor multiple applications for international protection, and prevent secondary movements. Eurodac rules will also include data on children aged six and above, enabling identification of children separated from their families and their protection from trafficking and exploitation; and introduction and detailed regulation of procedures in crisis and force majeure situations, in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2024/1349, including special mechanisms for handling sudden inflows and the exchange of information with other Member States and EU institutions.

The proposal also transposes the rules set out in Directive (EU) 2024/1346 to harmonize standards for material reception conditions, healthcare, education, and restrictions on freedom of movement, including the obligation for regular and individual assessment of special needs of applicants, especially vulnerable persons. Additionally, the obligation for applicants for international protection to remain in the territory of the Republic of Croatia during the procedure is emphasized, to ensure the effectiveness of the process and the enforceability of European mechanisms.

Following the conclusion of the public consultation at the end of 2025, the Government submitted amendments to the LITP to the parliamentary procedure in February 2026.

In May, the new Ordinance on the participation of asylees, foreigners under subsidiary protection and foreigners under temporary protection in paying accommodation costs entered into force.⁴¹ If, for these categories of beneficiaries, the regional office of the Croatian Institute for Social Work determines, during the period in which accommodation is being provided, that the person has assets or financial means with which they can cover the costs of accommodation, they are obliged to contribute to the payment of those accommodation costs.

In October, Ordinance on Amendments to the Ordinance on the Conditions and Manner of Exercising the Right to a State Scholarship Based on Socio-Economic Status entered into force.⁴² The Ordinance recognizes students who have been granted asylum and students under subsidiary protection as beneficiaries eligible for the state scholarship.

⁴¹ Ordinance on the participation of asylees, foreigners under subsidiary protection and foreigners under temporary protection in paying accommodation costs, Official Gazette 78/2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_05_78_1028.html

⁴² Ordinance on Amendments to the Ordinance on the Conditions and Manner of Exercising the Right to a State Scholarship Based on Socio-Economic Status, Official Gazette 126/2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_10_126_1818.html

In March, the majority of the amended provisions of the Law on Foreigners entered into force.⁴³ The amendments introduced extensive changes to the procedure for issuing residence and work permits for third-country nationals.

At the end of July, the Ordinance on Amendments to the Ordinance on the Treatment of Third-Country Nationals entered into force.⁴⁴

3.2.3. Institutional developments



• The 2025 MoI reorganisation established the Sector for International Protection as a dedicated unit with three services: the Service for International Protection, the Service for Reception and Accommodation and the Service for Dublin Procedure.



• A new decision on Interdepartmental Commission for the Protection of Unaccompanied Children was adopted in February 2025.

Concerning institutional and organisational developments within the asylum and migration system, important changes were introduced through the Regulation Amending the Regulation on the Internal Organisation of the MoI⁴⁵ which entered into force in June 2025.

Within the scope relating to matters of international protection, a structural change was introduced through the mentioned Regulation i.e. the former Sector for Foreigners and International Protection was divided into the Sector for Foreigners and Visas and the Sector for International Protection.

For the performance of tasks within the remit of the Sector for International Protection, the amendments established three services and their corresponding departments and units. The Service for International Protection comprises the Department for the International Protection Procedure, the Department for Integration, the Department for Information and Documentation Affairs, and the Department for Border Procedure. The Service for the Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection includes the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Zagreb, with its seat in Zagreb, the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Kutina, with its seat in Kutina, and the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection Dugi Dol, with its seat in Krnjak. Finally, the Service for Dublin Procedure was established. It comprises the Department for Incoming and Outgoing Requests and the Department for Transfers.

In addition, to enhance cooperation among the competent authorities and other stakeholders involved in the protection of unaccompanied children, a new Decision establishing

⁴³ Law on Amendments to the Law on Foreigners, Official Gazette No. 40/2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_03_40_545.html

⁴⁴ Ordinance on Amendments to the Ordinance on the Treatment of Third-Country Nationals Official Gazette 102/2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_07_102_1414.html

⁴⁵ Regulation Amending the Regulation on the Internal Organisation of the Ministry of the Interior, Official Gazette 90/2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_06_90_1250.html

the Interdepartmental Commission for the Protection of Unaccompanied Children⁴⁶ was adopted in February 2025.

According to the Decision, the Interdepartmental Commission is composed of: a representative of the ministry responsible for social welfare affairs, serving as President of the Interdepartmental Commission; three representatives of the ministry responsible for social welfare affairs, one serving as Deputy President, one as Secretary, and one as a member of the Interdepartmental Commission; a representative of the ministry responsible for health; three representatives of the ministry responsible for internal affairs; a representative of the ministry responsible for education; a representative of the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities; two representatives of international organizations engaged in the protection of children's rights and refugee rights; four representatives of social welfare institutions active in the field of child protection; three representatives of associations engaged in the protection of children's rights. Each member of the Interdepartmental Commission has a designated deputy.

Pursuant to the aforementioned Decision, in March 2025, a public call was announced for the nomination of representatives of associations to the Interdepartmental Commission for Unaccompanied Children.

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

4.1. Expressions of intention and applications for international protection



• Expressions of intention to apply for international protection fell 44%, from 26,776 in 2024 to 14,928 in 2025; leading nationalities were Russia (3,227), Türkiye (2,597), Afghanistan (1,365), Egypt (1,364), and Syria (1,253).



• 98.5% of intentions were registered at border police stations and police administrations and stations; the busiest entry points were Dvor (1,749), Stara Gradiška (1,675), and Korenica (1,169).



• Intentions at Zagreb Airport rose 111.5% and intentions expressed in detention increased 13.9% compared to 2024.



• 6,185 persons expressed intention while subject to compensatory measures.



• Only 1,236 first-time applications were lodged out of 14,928 expressed intentions, confirming Croatia's status as a transit country.

⁴⁶ Decision establishing the Interdepartmental Commission for the Protection of Unaccompanied Children, Official Gazette 21/2025, available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_02_21_186.html

In her Annual Report for 2025, the Ombudswoman states that, according to data from the Ministry of the Interior, 16,409 irregular migrants were recorded in Croatia in 2025. Out of this number, 5,730 persons received a return decision with a period for voluntary departure, and 2,608 of them left the country. An expulsion decision, ordering forced removal from the country, was issued to 6,295 persons, while a decision on forced removal with a period for voluntary departure was issued to 1,276 persons. The Ombudswoman also noted a decrease in the number of push-back complaints. However, certain NGOs continue to report on such practices, while the Ombudswoman's Office has also received individual complaints directly from the affected persons.⁴⁷

At the same time, a high number of expressions of intention to apply for international protection continued to be recorded, although lower than in the previous two years.

According to the MoI statistics, in 2025, 14,928 persons expressed their intention to apply for international protection (11,269 male, 3,659 female), including 1,229 unaccompanied children (27 of whom were girls). The largest number of people who expressed their intention to seek international protection were nationals of Russian Federation (3,227), Türkiye (2,597) Afghanistan (1,365), Egypt (1,364), Syria (1,253) and Bangladesh (954). This is a 44% decrease compared to 2024 when 26,776 persons expressed their intention to apply for international protection.⁴⁸

MoI further reported⁴⁹ that most applicants for international protection expressed their intention to apply for international protection at border police stations (7046) and police administration and stations (7660) which represent 98.5 % applicants. The place where most intentions were expressed was the Dvor border police station (1749), Stara Gradiška border police station (1675) and Korenica border police station (1169).

Compared to 2024, the total number of expressed intentions at the airport has increased in 2025 (111,5% more in total), particularly in relation to Zagreb (615) while in Zadar (8) and Split (Resnik) (3) a slight increase was observed.

A slight increase, compared to 2024, was also recorded in the number of applicants who expressed intention while detained in the Reception Centre for Foreigners (RCF) in Ježevo (34), the Transit Reception Centre (TRC) in Tovarnik (57), and the TRC in Trilj (131), so a total number of intentions expressed in detention increased by 13,9% compared to 2024.

Among the overall number of expressed intentions, a total of 6185 persons expressed their intention to apply for international protection after being apprehended in the context of the application of compensatory measures. The largest number of expressed intentions while being subject to compensatory measures was recorded among nationals of Türkiye (978), followed by Bangladesh (761), Afghanistan (743), Pakistan (570), Egypt (484), Morocco (321), China (265), Syria (256), India (169), Palestine (129), Nepal (126), Ghana (119), Iraq (97), Iran (76), Sri Lanka (66), and Sierra Leone (46), while 979 persons were recorded under other nationalities.

⁴⁷ Ombudswoman: Annual Report for 2025, available at: <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/download/izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2025-godinu/?wpdmdl=23118&refresh=69cd1d3691f351775050038>

⁴⁸ Ministry of Interior, Statistics 2025, available at: <https://mup.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/statistika/2026/1/Web%20statistika%2021.%20sijecnja%202026..xlsx>

⁴⁹ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC

However, when comparing the number of expressed intentions to apply for international protection with the number of applications actually lodged, a significant difference is evident indicating that Croatia remains a transit country, rather than a destination country for applicants for international protection. In 2025, a total of 1,236 new applications for international protection were recorded. This figure refers strictly to the first-time applicants and does not include subsequent applications submitted during 2025. Consequently, the total number of individuals lodging applications for international protection within the year may be higher when accounting for those re-entering the procedure.

The primary countries of origin for these applicants who lodged the first-time applications for international procedure were: Türkiye (265 applications), Russian Federation (206 applications), Syria (169 applications), Afghanistan (75 applications), Nepal (55 applications), Egypt (47 applications), and Morocco (39 applications).

As for the litigation in cases on the access to the asylum procedure, in July 2025, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) issued a judgment against the Republic of Croatia in the case of *Y.K. v. Croatia*.⁵⁰ The applicant, Y.K., is a Turkish national and ethnic Kurd. The case concerns Y.K.'s attempts to claim international protection in Croatia while he was held in the RCF in Ježevo after he clandestinely entered Croatia in February 2021. He alleged that he was tortured and prosecuted numerous times in Türkiye owing to his political activism, forcing him to flee. In March 2021, following a return decision, Y.K. left Croatia. Relying on Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment), Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) and Article 34 (right of individual petition) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), Y.K. alleged that he was repeatedly refused access to the international-protection procedure by the Croatian authorities, that he couldn't challenge his removal from Croatia, and that he was denied access to a lawyer while in Croatia. The ECtHR found that the procedural aspect of Article 3 of the ECHR, as well as Article 13 read in conjunction with Article 3 of the ECHR, had been violated.⁵¹

Speaking of migration generally in the context of the ECHR, it is important to mention the current initiative within the Council of Europe aimed at adopting a political declaration on migration and the ECHR. In December, 2025, 27 Council of Europe member states, among which Croatia, delivered a Joint Statement to the Conference of Ministers of Justice, calling for stricter migration policies and changes to the interpretation of the ECHR.⁵² It is noted that a proper balance must be achieved between the individual rights and interests of migrants and significant public interests of protecting freedom and security within societies, and that a greater clarity is sought regarding the interpretation of 'inhuman or degrading treatment' under Article 3 of the ECHR. The statement also seeks to prioritize national security by easing the expulsion of foreign criminals and tackling the instrumentalization of migration, with the goal of adopting a formal political declaration in May 2026.

⁵⁰ ECtHR: Judgment in the case of *Y.K. v. CROATIA* (Application no. [38776/21](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-244097%22%7D)), available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-244097%22%7D>}

⁵¹ ECtHR: Press Release: Judgments and decisions of 17 July 2025, available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng-press#%7B%22languageisocode%22:%5B%22ENG%22%7D,%22itemid%22:%5B%22003-8285532-11669762%22%7D,%22display%22:%5B%22%7D%7D>}

⁵² Joint Statement delivered to the Conference of Ministers of Justice of the Council of Europe, 10 December 2025; available at: https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/JointStatement_20251210.pdf

4.2. The Dublin procedure



• Croatia received 14,882 incoming Dublin requests in 2025 (77.6% take-back) and 1,364 incoming transfers, led by Germany (572), France (178), and Switzerland (172).



• Croatia submitted 3,425 outgoing Dublin requests and completed 28 outgoing transfers.



• Médecins du Monde reported complex health needs among Dublin returnees including chronic conditions, oncological cases, and mental health deterioration, while lack of transferred medical documentation was identified as a systemic barrier.

The Dublin procedure remains an important component of the Croatian asylum system, however the 2025 data on the Dublin procedure from MoI shows a significant difference between incoming requests and executed transfers to Croatia.

According to data from the MoI,⁵³ in 2025 Croatia received 14,882 incoming requests in the following categories: 11,558 (77,6%) take back requests, 804 (5,4%) take charge requests, 1601 (10,7%) requests for information, 858 (5,7%) requests for the take back reconsideration and 61 (0,4%) requests for reconsideration of take-charge requests.

During 2025, Belgium, Slovenia, and Denmark requested individual guarantees for certain approved incoming requests.

In 2025, there were a total of 1364 incoming transfers. Of these, the largest number of people were transferred from the following ten countries: Germany (572 or 41,9%), France (178 or 13%), Switzerland (172 or 12,6%), Austria (149 or 10,9%), Netherlands (123 or 9%), Belgium (49 or 3,5 %), Slovenia (29 or 2,1%), Hungary (22 or 1,6%) Norway (18 or 1,3%) and Sweden (18 or 1,3%).

Regarding the nationalities of individuals transferred to Croatia, the top ten groups were led by nationals of Türkiye (297), Russian Federation (271), Syria (256), followed by the Afghanistan (248), Morocco (43), China including Hong Kong (42), Palestine (19), Algeria (18), Iran (17) and Iraq (16).

In 2025, allegations of pushbacks and mistreatment at the Croatian border officials continued to be monitored by national courts across the EU when assessing transfer to Croatia under the Dublin procedure. However, courts maintained that alleged police misconduct during irregular entries does not constitute evidence of systemic flaws within Croatia's asylum system. These rulings emphasized that police actions occurring prior to a formal asylum application are not a determining factor in assessing the stability of the asylum system.⁵⁴ This interpretation was further supported by an April 2025 decision from the UN Committee against Torture, which, while

⁵³ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC.

⁵⁴ EUAA: Jurisprudence related to the Dublin Procedure in 2025; Fact sheet EUAA/IAS/2026/43 February 2026, available at: <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/jurisprudence-related-dublin-procedure-2025>

acknowledging reports of border ill-treatment, concluded that Switzerland would not breach Article 3 of the Convention against Torture by transferring an Afghan applicant to Croatia under the Dublin III Regulation, stating that the alleged mistreatment during border pushbacks did not automatically imply a personal risk of ill treatment after a Dublin transfer.⁵⁵

Several organizations reported that, during 2025, they continued to observe a concerning practice whereby persons returned to Croatia under the Dublin Regulation were, upon arrival at the airport, provided only with a note indicating the address of the Reception Centre for applicants for international protection (RCAIP) in Zagreb or Kutina, without additional information on the international protection procedure or arrangements for transportation to the reception facilities.

Médecins du Monde (MdM)⁵⁶, organization that provide health care to applicants for international protection, in the RCAIP in Zagreb and Kutina, observed that applicants for international protection returned to Croatia under the Dublin procedure often face significantly more complex health needs compared to those arriving via non-EU routes. Many returnees present with serious physical and/or mental health conditions, including chronic illnesses, disabilities, oncology cases, and children with severe or congenital diseases, as well as individuals whose treatment had already begun in other countries. A key challenge identified by MdM was the frequent lack of transfer of medical documentation. Particular concerns were raised in cases involving individuals with conditions that cannot be adequately treated in Croatia. In 2025, a continued increase in applicants with mental health conditions was observed, with a majority of such cases in the RCAIP in Zagreb involving Dublin returnees. These individuals often had pre-existing diagnoses and their transfers were frequently associated with a deterioration of mental health or the emergence of new symptoms, resulting in frequent crisis interventions and hospitalizations.

In addition, the Croatian Red Cross (CRC)⁵⁷, which also operated in RCAIP during 2025, reported about challenges in working with applicants for international protection returned to Croatia under the Dublin III Regulation. Some individuals exhibited a reluctance to engage, manifested through non-participation in social activities, and expressed dissatisfaction regarding their accommodation and return to Croatia.

As for outgoing requests, in 2025, Croatia submitted 3425 outgoing requests under the Dublin III Regulation in the following categories: 2620 (76.5%) take back requests, 586 (17,1%) take charge requests, 130 (3,8%) requests for information, 86 (2,5%) requests for the reconsideration of take back request and 3 request (0.08%) for reconsideration of a take charge request.

During 2025, Croatia requested individual guarantees in cases related to the outgoing requests from Bulgaria and the Hellenic Republic.

⁵⁵ UN: The Committee Against Torture found that Switzerland would not breach Article 3 of the Convention by transferring an Afghan applicant to Croatia under the Dublin III Regulation, stating that the alleged mistreatment during border pushbacks did not automatically imply a personal risk of ill treatment after a Dublin transfer; available at: <https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=5233>

⁵⁶ Information provided by Médecins du Monde, 17 February 2026.

⁵⁷ Information provided by Croatian Red Cross, 13 February 2026

In 2025, a total of 28 outgoing transfers took place from Croatia to other countries. The highest number of transfers were to Germany (8), Switzerland (5), and Spain (4). Two transfers each were made to France, Slovenia, and Portugal, while one transfer each was carried out to Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Sweden, and Malta.

For the purpose of implementing a Dublin transfer, and based on Article 28 of Regulation (EU) 604/2013, Croatia used detention in one case during 2025 to ensure the transfer of a person to another Member State, as it was assessed that there was a risk of absconding.⁵⁸

Both incoming and outgoing requests were predominantly submitted under Article 18(1)(b) of Regulation (EU) 604/2013. A significant number of requests in both categories were also made under Articles 12(1), 12(3), and 12(4) of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, based on issued visas or residence permits.

4.3. Restriction of freedom of movement



- 130 decisions restricting freedom of movement were issued in 2025 and 122 persons were detained.



- The most invoked detention ground was protection of national security or public order (46 individuals), followed by risk of absconding (34) and prevention of removal obstruction (29).



- 10 persons with special reception needs were placed in detention facilities.



- The Committee of Ministers closed examination of two issues arising from the ECtHR judgment *M.H. and Others v. Croatia*: prolonged placement of children in prison-type transit centres, and restricted access to legal counsel, while further effort remains required in other areas.

MoI⁵⁹ reported that in 2025, a total of 130 decisions restricting freedom of movement were issued pursuant to the LITP, primarily by the RCAIP (66 decisions), but also by the Pleso Airport Police Station (29), local police stations (25), and border police stations (10).

Out of the total number of individuals affected by these measures, 122 persons were placed in detention during the reporting period. The distribution across detention facilities was as follows: in the RCF in Ježevo 95 applicants for international protection were detained (90 men, including one boy in the 0-13 age group, accompanied by his parents, and 5 women); in the TRC in Tovarnik 3 men and in the TRC in Trilj 24 persons (22 men and 2 women) were detained. Regarding the nationalities of detainees, the most represented groups were citizens of the Russian Federation (33), followed by Syria (10), Türkiye (9), Pakistan (8) and Egypt (8). One stateless male applicant for international protection, was detained in the RCF in Ježevo.

⁵⁸ Regarding detentions that were ordered for a Dublin transfer, a minor statistical discrepancy exists within the Ministry of the Interior's data. The narrative text notes one individual, whereas the corresponding statistical data indicates two

⁵⁹ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC.

During the year, 10 individuals with special reception needs were placed in detention facilities.

The majority of decisions were issued on the grounds of protecting national security or public order (for a total of 46 individuals), most of whom were accommodated in the RCF in Ježevo.

A breakdown by reasons and place of detention is presented in the Table 3.

Table 3: Overview of Grounds/Reasons for Detention by Location

Reasons (Article 54 of the LITP)	Ježevo	Tovarnik	Trilj	Total
Art. 54(2)(1): Establishing facts and circumstances on which the application for international protection is based / risk of absconding	26	2	6	34
Art. 54(2)(2): Establishing or verifying identity or nationality	1	1	1	3
Art. 54(2)(3): Protection of national security or public order	39	0	7	46
Art. 54(2)(5): Preventing danger to life or property	4	0	0	4
Art. 54(2)(6): Repeated attempts to leave Croatia during the procedure	2	0	0	2
Art. 54(2)(7): Preventing delay or obstruction of removal/return	20	0	9	29
Art. 54(2)(1) & (6): Combined grounds (Establishing facts and circumstances and repeated attempts to leave Croatia)	1	0	0	1
Art. 54(3): Dublin transfer / Risk of absconding	2	0	0	2
Art. 54(6) ⁶⁰	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	95	3	24	122

Source: MoI⁶¹

For the remaining 8 applicants for international protection, the restriction of freedom of movement was implemented through an alternative measure, specifically the obligation to report to the RCAIP at designated times, in accordance with Article 54, paragraph 5, item 3 of the LITP.

Judicial review of decisions restricting the freedom of movement of applicants for international protection is carried out by the administrative courts. In 2025, the Administrative Court in Zagreb issued 126 decisions in cases concerning restrictions on freedom of movement. Of these, in administrative disputes 104 law suits were dismissed by judgment, while in 15

⁶⁰ This might be a statistical reporting error, as the aforementioned paragraph does not prescribe the grounds/ reasons for detention, but rather stipulates that the measure of detention in a reception centre for foreigners may be imposed if an individual assessment determines that the purpose of restricting freedom of movement cannot be achieved by other (milder) measures

⁶¹ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC.

administrative disputes the Court delivered reformatory judgments (however, no data is available as to whether these concerned persons in detention or whether they resulted in release or, for example, the application of a less coercive measure). In three cases, the Court issued decisions discontinuing the administrative disputes; in one administrative dispute, the law suit was rejected as inadmissible; and in three administrative disputes, the Court declared itself without jurisdiction. The average duration of these administrative disputes was 40 days.⁶² One attorney reported that in several cases, hearings before Administrative court were scheduled too late. In one administrative dispute, a hearing was set just a week before the deadline for the detention expired, while the announcement of the judgment was scheduled after the restriction period had already ended, even though the restriction had been imposed for a duration of three months.⁶³ The other administrative courts in Rijeka, Osijek, and Split had no administrative disputes concerning restrictions on the freedom of movement of applicants for international protection in 2025.

The High Administrative Court ruled in 12 cases following appeals against decisions of the administrative courts, dismissing the appeal in 10 cases and upholding it in 2 cases.

In addition to the statistical overview, in 2025, progress was noted in the execution of European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgment in the case *M.H. and others v. Croatia*, which in some parts concern detention. Namely, in the case *M.H. and others v. Croatia*, concerning an Afghan family of 14 where the ECtHR found that Croatia had violated several Articles of the ECHR, in June 2025 the Committee of Ministers examined the execution of this case. The Committee of Ministers has noted progress in the execution of the judgment and officially closed the examination of two issues: prolonged placement of children in transit centres with prison-type element and the restrictions on access to legal counsel. However, the Committee of Ministers expects the Croatian authorities to provide further information and continue efforts in several other areas.⁶⁴

These developments remain relevant to assessing current detention practices, particularly regarding safeguards for children.

⁶² Information provided by Administrative court in Zagreb, 4 February 2026.

⁶³ Information provided by the attorney at law, 9 February 2026.

⁶⁴ *M.H. and Others v. Croatia* (Application No.15670/18)

Supervision of the execution of the European Court's judgments, available at: [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22CM/Del/Dec\(2025\)1531/H46-14E%22%7D](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22CM/Del/Dec(2025)1531/H46-14E%22%7D)

4.4. Refugee status determination (RSD) procedure



• The Ministry of the Interior issued 1,493 decisions on international protection status in 2025; 25 persons were granted protection - 24 refugee status and 1 subsidiary protection.



• Syria was the leading country of origin for recognised refugees (5), followed by Türkiye and Nigeria (3 each).



• 57 applications were processed under the accelerated procedure;



• 431 inadmissibility decisions were issued, most commonly on the ground of established responsibility of another EEA Member State (308 cases).



• The MoI discontinued 52,813 international protection procedures in 2025 regardless of the year applications were lodged, primarily due to applicants leaving the reception centres and Croatia.

During the reporting period, the MoI issued a total of 1,493 decisions⁶⁵ regarding the status of applicants with the following results.

International Protection was granted to a total of 25 persons (see Table 4). Of these, 24 received refugee status (asylum), while 1 boy from Syria (age group 14-17) was granted subsidiary protection. The majority of persons granted asylum in 2025 were male, accounting for 71% (17 persons) of the total, out of which 12 were boys, while 29% (7 persons) were female, out of which 4 were girls. The 24 granted refugee statuses were distributed among 12 different nationalities. Syria (5) was the primary country of origin for recognized refugees, followed by Türkiye (3) and Nigeria (3). An analysis of the age groups among those granted asylum in 2025 reveals a high concentration of refugee status recognition among minors, who represent the most significant portion of this population. The largest single demographic is children aged 0 to 13, with a total of 14 children (10 boys and 4 girls) receiving refugee status. Among the boys in this age group, half were from Syria (5), while the others originated from Nigeria (2), DR Congo (1), Eritrea (1), and Iran (1). The four girls in the same category were from Türkiye (2), DR Congo (1), and Egypt (1). It is crucial to emphasize that 10 of these children were born in Croatia, acquiring their status based on the refugee status already held by their parents, rather than through independent international protection procedures. The representation of other age groups was notably smaller. The category of older minors (aged 14 to 17) consisted of only two boys, originating from Afghanistan and Iran. Among young adults (aged 18 to 34), status was granted to five individuals, including two males from Nigeria and Cameroon, and three females from Afghanistan, Malawi, and the Russian Federation. The adult population (aged 35 to 64) was represented by three males from Burundi, the Russian Federation, and Türkiye. Finally, no individuals aged 65 or older were granted asylum during the 2025 reporting period. This distribution underscores that, beyond the prominent group of children, the granting of international protection to adults remains limited.

⁶⁵ Due to the duration of the international protection procedure, these decisions in some cases may pertain to applications filed in previous years.

It is important to emphasize that the international protection statuses granted in 2025 do not necessarily correlate with applications submitted within the same year. Some of the decisions issued in 2025 may therefore relate to applications lodged in previous years, rather than to applications submitted in 2025 itself. Consequently, due to this and in view of other data provided by the MoI, it is not possible to determine a recognition rate in 2025.

MoI reported that in the course of 2025, 266 applications were rejected, while 1,202 applications were cancelled and dismissed (see Table 4).

Table 4: Overview of decision making

Country of Origin*	New Applications	Refugee status (asylum)	Subsidiary protection	Rejected	Otherwise closed (cancelled and dismissed)	Pending
AFGHANISTAN	75	2		8	90	18
ALBANIA	1			2		
ALGERIA	18			16	9	1
ARMENIA	1					1
AZERBAIJAN	14			1	14	8
BANGLADESH	24			11	15	9
BELARUSIA	2			1	1	1
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	3			1	1	1
BRAZIL				1		
BURUNDI	6	1		11	5	3
MONTENEGRO	1			1		
DR CONGO	19	2		4	21	8
EGYPT	47	1		25	30	7
ERITREA	1	1			3	
ETHIOPIA						1
GABON	1					1
GAMBIA	2			1		2
GHANA	14			1	3	10
GUINEA	2			2		2
INDIA	16			9	11	3
IRAQ	15			2	17	7
IRAN	15	2		1	20	9
YEMEN	1				21	
JORDAN	7			3	3	2
CAMEROON	5	1		2		7
CANADA					1	
KAZAKHSTAN	2					1
CHINA	26			1	13	12

KYRGYZSTAN	1					1
COLOMBIA				2		2
CONGO	3			2	1	5
KOSOVO	1				2	
CUBA	1			10	7	5
LEBANON	3			1	4	
LIBYA	3			1	4	
MALAWI		1				
MALI	1				1	1
MOROCCO	39			17	39	5
MOLDOVA	2			1	1	
MONGOLIA	3				29	2
NEPAL	55			18	26	14
NIGERIA	19	3		2	2	19
IVORY COAST	4				1	3
PAKISTAN	28			16	42	8
PALESTINE	26			1	20	11
RWANDA	1				2	
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	206	2		41	262	95
SENEGAL	1				1	
SIERRA LEONE	20			7	6	15
SYRIA	169	5	1	3	171	79
NORTH MACEDONIA	2				2	
SOMALIA	4				8	2
SERBIA	8			4		4
SUDAN	5			1	3	2
SRI LANKA	3				2	1
TAJIKISTAN	6				1	
TANZANIA	3			2	2	1
TUNISIA	5			1	6	1
TURKMENISTAN	1				1	
TÜRKIYE	265	3		29	263	38
UKRAINE	17			3	6	15
UZBEKISTAN	9				6	4
GREAT BRITAIN	3				1	2
VENEZUELA					2	3
STATELESS (Estonia)	1					1
Total	1236	24	1	266	1202	453

Source: MoI⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC.

According to the 2025 Annual Report of the Ombudswoman, the MoI discontinued 52,813 procedures for granting international protection in 2025, regardless of the year the applications for international protection were lodged, most commonly due to the applicants leaving the RCAIP and Croatia.⁶⁷

MoI further reported that a total of 57 applications for international protection were processed under the accelerated procedure. The primary countries of origin in those cases included Algeria (11), Nepal (9), Egypt (8), and Morocco (8).

In terms of the admissibility of applications, the MoI issued 431 decisions dismissing applications for international protection as inadmissible. The most frequent reason for inadmissibility was based on Article 43(1)(5) i.e. established responsibility of another EEA Member State, accounting for 308 cases, followed by Article 43(1)(1) i.e. international protection granted by another EEA Member State in 68 cases, and Article 43(2) i.e. subsequent application dismissed as inadmissible in 55 cases. The highest number of decisions dismissing applications for international protection as inadmissible involved nationals from Afghanistan (110), Syria (70), Morocco (66), and Russia (45).

According to the MoI, as of 31 December 2025, there were 387 pending cases involving first-time applicants for international protection who had not yet received a final decision.

Furthermore, as of 31 December 2025, there were 11,014 applicants in the procedure who had expressed their intention for international protection but had not formally submitted an application.

In accordance with LITP, the MoI, ex officio, conducts procedure to examine the existence of the prerequisites for the cessation of asylum or subsidiary protection.⁶⁸ In 2025, asylum ceased for 4 citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Furthermore, in accordance with the LITP, the MoI, ex officio, conducts procedures to determine whether grounds for the revocation of international protection exist.⁶⁹ In 2025, a total of 4 cases of asylum revocation were recorded pursuant to Article 50 of the LITP. These cases involved nationals of Syria (1), Morocco (1), Somalia (1), and Pakistan (1). However, it should be noted that the MoI did not provide information regarding the specific reasons i.e. legal grounds that led to these decisions, neither in cases of cessation nor revocation of international protection.

In June 2025, UNHCR organized a meeting on refugee status determination with officials from the MoI's Service for International Protection where various aspects of the decision-making process were discussed.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Ombudswoman: Annual Report for 2025, available at: <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/download/izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2025-godinu/?wpdmdl=23118&refresh=69cd1d3691f351775050038>

⁶⁸ Article 49 paragraph 3 LITP

⁶⁹ Article 50 paragraph 2 LITP

⁷⁰ Information provided by UNHCR, 10 April 2026.

5 ASYLUM IN PRACTICE: ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND SERVICES FOR APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

5.1. Reception conditions



• Access to reception centres remained largely restricted throughout 2025; only the Croatian Red Cross and Médecins du Monde held continuous access, with the Croatian Law Centre gaining entry in mid-December 2025.



• The majority of applicants continued to depart reception centres within 24 hours of arrival.



• 244 of 251 applicants accommodated outside reception centres with special guarantees were unaccompanied children placed in social welfare institutions.

Throughout 2025, access for civil society organizations to the RCAIP remained restricted. Only the CRC and MdM had access to both facilities, and were conducting activities based on their project agreements with the MoI. However, in mid-December 2025, following the commencement of a new AMIF project focused on providing legal counselling to applicants in procedures before MoI, access to the RCAIP was also granted to the CLC.

The CRC⁷¹ reported that despite a decrease in the number of newly arrived applicants for international protection compared to 2024, the trend of very short stays in the RCAIP persisted, with the majority of individuals leaving the RCAIP within 24 hours. This continues to indicate that Croatia remains primarily a transit country rather than a destination for applicants. Such rapid departures made it difficult for CRC staff to carry out initial needs assessments, particularly as individuals often arrived late in the evening and already left early the following morning. This challenge was especially pronounced in the case of unaccompanied minors, with an increased number leaving the RCAIP within 24 hours of arrival, before CRC's staff had the opportunity to establish contact with them or assess their needs, further complicating the provision of adequate support.

The CRC continued its work with applicants for international protection, under its AMIF project, in both RCAIP in Zagreb and Kutina. Upon arrival, applicants received accommodation tailored to their needs and vulnerability and were provided with basic humanitarian aid, including hygiene products, clothing, and footwear. Key CRC's activities included psychosocial and practical support, identification and specialized care for vulnerable groups, and the organization of daily life and activities (social, educational, and sporting). The CRC also facilitated access to healthcare, including specialist exams, medications, nutritional supplements, and medical equipment. The inclusion of applicants into the local community was actively encouraged. Furthermore, the CRC Tracing Service continued its work on Restoring Family Links.⁷²

⁷¹ Information provided by Croatian Red Cross, 13 February 2026.

⁷² Information provided by Croatian Red Cross, 13 February 2026.

MdM continued to provide multidisciplinary and linguistically adapted medical care to applicants for international protection, in the RCAIP in Zagreb and Kutina. MdM also continued to conduct initial health examinations for newly arrived applicants for international protection. The organisation facilitated access to medical consultations, mental health care, crisis interventions and the distribution of prescribed medication through teamwork of general practitioners, nurses, psychologists, psychiatric specialists and interpreters.⁷³

In December 2025, UNHCR conducted a three-day training for 60 officials working at the RCAIP in Zagreb and Kutina. The training focused on critical protection areas, including prevention and response in situation of gender-based violence, trafficking in human beings and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, aiming to enhance institutional capacity for identifying protection risks and ensuring highest standards of safeguarding accountability in reception facilities.⁷⁴

According to the organization Are You Syrious, concerns related to the presence of cockroaches and bedbugs in the RCAIP in Zagreb were reported by individuals who were in contact with the organization during 2025.⁷⁵

The Ombudswoman in her 2025 report also reported on ongoing pest infestations (bedbugs and cockroaches) at the RCAIP in Zagreb. Other reported grievances included poor water supply and inadequate quality and quantity of food. Although the Ombudswoman's interventions successfully resolved most issues, pest control efforts, including weekly treatments, remained ineffective. During the year, the Ombudswoman also received complaints from applicants regarding safety within the RCAIP, specifically concerning the conduct of security personnel and police officers in relation to various circumstances (allegations of physical assault, sexual violence, and the excessive use of force during security checks).⁷⁶

According to data from the MoI⁷⁷, a total of 251 individuals were subject to special reception guarantees and were accommodated outside the RCAIP in Zagreb and Kutina. This included a single mother with a minor child, two LGBTQ+ female applicants, and three female applicants for international protection with health-related conditions (a cardiac condition and voice, speech and language disorders), who were accommodated in private housing. In addition, among those 251 individuals, 244 were unaccompanied children seeking international protection accommodated in social welfare institutions. These included the following institutions: the Ivanec Community Service Centre, Banija-Karlovac Community Service Centre, Zagreb-Dugave Community Service Centre, Lug Samoborski Education Centre, Vrbina Sisak Community Service Centre, Rijeka Community Service Centre, Split Community Service Centre, "Kuća sretnih ciglica" Community Service Centre in Slavonski Brod, Osijek Community Service Centre, and Lipik Community Service Centre.

As in the case of accommodation RCAIP, the majority of unaccompanied children voluntarily left the social welfare institutions shortly after placement and did not return or notify a

⁷³ Information provided by Médecins du Monde, 17 February 2026.

⁷⁴ Information provided by UNHCR, 10 April 2026.

⁷⁵ Information provided by Are You Syrious, 17 February 2026.

⁷⁶ Ombudswoman: Annual Report for 2025, available at: <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/download/izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2025-godinu/?wpdmdl=23118&refresh=69cd1d3691f351775050038>

⁷⁷ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC.

change of residence within Croatia. As a result, at the end of 2025 only two children remained accommodated in community service centres (Lipik and Dugave).

5.2. Access to rights and services for applicants for international protection



- The MoI issued 359 certificates confirming the right to work to applicants in 2025 (8 rejected); no applicants contributed to accommodation costs due to employment.



- 104 applicants with the right to work registered with the CES; 90 received individual counselling and 21 were included in active labour market measures.



- 51 children were enrolled in primary school and 7 in secondary school.

Under the LITP, applicants for international protection acquire the right to work after three months from lodging their application, provided that the MoI has not issued a decision within that period and that the delay is not attributable to the applicant's conduct. Upon request, the MoI issues a certificate confirming the right to work. Where the conditions are not met, the MoI issues a decision refusing the issuance of such a certificate.⁷⁸

According to data from the MoI⁷⁹, in 2025 a total of 359 applications for certificates confirming the right to work were approved, while 8 were rejected. During the same period, 282 applicants for international protection submitted employment contracts for review to RCAIP's staff. No applicants were contributing to accommodation costs due to their employment.

Under the LLM, applicants for international protection and their family members may register with the CES under the same condition that no decision on their application for international protection has been issued within the prescribed timeframe and the applicant has not contributed to the delay in decision-making.⁸⁰

According to data from the CES⁸¹, between 1 January and 31 December 2025, a total of 104 applicants for international protection with the right to work were registered in CES unemployment register (of whom 27 were women). Following registration, individuals were included in individual counselling activities, and during 2025 a total of 90 applicants for international protection with the right to work participated in 126 counselling. In addition, 21 applicants for international protection with the right to work were included in active labour market policy measures aimed at facilitating faster and more effective labour market integration.

With regard to the educational system and the number of children applicants for international protection who were enrolled in and attended primary and secondary education during 2025, according to data from the MoI, 51 children were enrolled in primary school (28 boys and 23 girls), while 7 were enrolled in secondary school (5 boys and 2 girls).

⁷⁸ Article 61 (1) (3) Law on International and Temporary Protection

⁷⁹ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC.

⁸⁰ Article 14(2) Law on Labor Market

⁸¹ Information provided by Croatian Employment Service, 10 February 2026.

6 INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION – ACTIVITIES AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

6.1. Access to rights and services for persons under international protection



- CES registered 66 unemployed asylees and 13 persons with subsidiary protection;



- 43 asylees and 10 persons granted subsidiary protection secured employment through CES mediation.



- 63 family reunification requests were submitted in 2025, predominantly by Syrians (33).



- 11 persons under international protection acquired Croatian citizenship.



- Systemic integration barriers persist in three areas: Croatian language courses, adequate housing, and healthcare registration.



- The Centre for Cultural Dialogue launched the three-year "New Neighbours 2.0" project with the MoI, focused on integration support to beneficiaries of international protection.

For beneficiaries of international protection, access to employment and inclusion in the labour market constitute a cornerstone of the integration process. In addition to ensuring financial autonomy and enabling individuals to provide for themselves and their families, employment contributes to rebuilding a sense of self-confidence and social value. It can also facilitate recovery from past trauma.

In accordance with the LLM, beneficiaries who were granted asylum and subsidiary protection, as well as their family members, may register with the CES. Under LLM, they enjoy the same rights and obligations as Croatian nationals.⁸²

According to the information received from CES⁸³ in 2025, the register of unemployed persons included 66 individuals granted asylum (of whom 28 women) and 13 individuals granted subsidiary protection (of whom 4 women). After being registered in the register of unemployed persons, individuals are included in individual counselling activities and in 2025, 63 individuals with asylum (103 counselling), 15 individuals with subsidiary protection (19 counselling) and 6 family members of persons granted international protection (9 counselling) participated in those activities.

Additionally, through CES' mediation, in 2025, 43 individuals granted asylum and 10 individuals with subsidiary protection were employed. As for active labour market policy measures,

⁸² Article 14(1) Law on Labor Market

⁸³ Information provided by Croatian Employment Service, 10 February 2026.

3 persons granted asylum, 1 person granted subsidiary protection and 1 family member of person granted international protection, were included in these measures.

Another important precondition for easier and more successful integration is family reunification that provides an opportunity for individuals granted international protection to rebuild their family lives in Croatia. Persons who have been granted international protection, after acquiring the international protection status, also exercise the right to family reunification in Croatia on the basis of the LITP. This right is additionally regulated primarily by the provisions of the Law on Foreigner, as well as by the relevant bylaws. In 2025, there were 63 requests for temporary stay based on family reunification with persons under international protection. The geographical distribution of these applicants shows a wide range of origins, though the Syrian Arab Republic was the most prominent, accounting for 33 of the total applications.⁸⁴

Table 5. Temporary stay applications based on family reunification by nationality

Nationality	Number of applications for temporary stay based on family reunification
Syrian Arab Republic	33
Russian Federation	4
Republic of Iraq	4
Islamic Republic of Iran	3
Republic of Sierra Leone	3
Others	16
Total	63

Source: MoI⁸⁵

However, it should be noted that data is not available regarding how many of these applications were ultimately approved, nor how many family members of persons granted international protection subsequently applied for long-term visas and arrived in Croatia.

According to the annual report of the Ombudsperson for Children, in 2025 three temporary stays were granted to children under the age of 14 for the purpose of family reunification with persons under international protection.⁸⁶

The organization Are You Syrious reported that, for children arriving in Croatia through family reunification procedures, further development of systematic support and follow-up mechanisms would be beneficial. In practice, school enrolment and related support are frequently facilitated by civil society organizations, and the process may take several months.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC

⁸⁵ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC

⁸⁶ Ombudswoman for Children: Annual Report for 2025, available at: <https://dijete.hr/hr/download/izvjesce-o-radupravobraniteljice-za-djecu-za-2025-godinu/?wpdmdl=22442&masterkey=OKCQngIKWtGfizW2eK4L7WTkcIQQFPqZU5Q8W9IwGpmmTtldf649QQw7SOHMTdB2i9coKf2cfYj39Bj6gCp8Hl4y1UuVNvKMSkd01M7nFzN0>

⁸⁷ Information provided by Are You Syrious, 17 February 2026.

As regard travel documents, MoI reported that the following documents were issued in 2025 to beneficiaries of international protection: a total of 114 Convention 1951 passports were issued to asylees and a total of 5 special travel documents were issued to foreigners under subsidiary protection.

In addition, the path to long-term integration is often marked by the acquisition of citizenship. Until the end of 2025, a total of 38 persons (25 men and 13 women) who were granted international protection have been admitted to Croatian citizenship. Focusing specifically on the 2025 reporting period, 11 persons (8 men and 3 women) under international protection successfully acquired Croatian citizenship.⁸⁸

However, the long-standing systemic challenges in the field of integration continued to persist. Non-governmental organizations still identify the provision of Croatian language courses, access to adequate housing, and registration with healthcare providers as the main obstacles in the field of integration. In addition, family reunification procedures for family members residing in countries of origin remain lengthy and overly bureaucratic, making them difficult to navigate for persons granted international protection and their families, who therefore require additional support.

In April 2025, the Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia, together with the Ombudswoman for Children, the Ombudswoman for Gender Equality and the Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities, submitted a joint contribution for Croatia's fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) before the UN Human Rights Council.⁸⁹ The contribution noted the absence of a comprehensive migration and integration policy and highlighted that applicants for international protection, beneficiaries of international protection and migrant workers remain exposed to prejudice and discrimination, while systematic integration measures such as language learning, housing and access to healthcare remain limited.

In 2025, the Centre for Cultural Dialogue (CCD) launched the three-year project "*New Neighbours 2.0 – Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection into Croatian Society*" in cooperation with the MoI. The overall objective of the project is to improve living conditions and enhance the quality of life of beneficiaries of international protection. The integration support is implemented by five mobile teams composed of integration case managers and cultural mediators, deployed across several cities in Croatia. Through an individualised approach, these mobile teams facilitate access to opportunities for beneficiaries granted international protection, while strengthening their connections with the local community.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Data shared by MoI with UNHCR in March 2026, on file with CLC

⁸⁹ Written contribution for the 4th Review of Croatia under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on the situation of human rights by the UN Human Rights Council Joint submission by the Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia in cooperation with the Ombudswoman for Children, Ombudswoman for Gender Equality and the Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities, available at: <https://www.ombudsman.hr/hr/download/written-contribution-for-the-4th-review-of-croatia-under-the-universal-periodic-review-upr/?wpdmdl=22376&refresh=69b02c32002281773153330>

⁹⁰ Centre for Cultural Dialogue: The implementation of the project "New Neighbours 2.0" by the Centre for Cultural Dialogue, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, has commenced, available at: <https://ccd.hr/zapocela-provedba-projekta-novi-susjedi-2-0-centra-za-kulturu-dijaloga-u-suradnji-s-ministarstvom-unutarnjih-poslova/>

6.2. Coordinative activities - Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities



- The OHRRNM continued implementing the AMIF-funded SINERGY project.
- A report on employment-related rights of third-country nationals, developed with Advisory Group of Third-Country Nationals and Persons of Migrant Background input, was published in 2025.

Pursuant to the LITP, the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: OHRRNM) coordinates the work of all ministries, non-governmental organisations and other bodies involved in the process of integration of asylees and persons under subsidiary protection into society, within the framework of the Permanent Commission for the Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society and its respective Working Group responsible for drafting proposals for national strategic documents in this field.

In 2025, the OHRRNM continued implementing activities under the SINERGY project—Ensuring a Synergistic Approach to the Integration of Third-Country Nationals project, co-financed by the European Union’s Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund.⁹¹ One of the key activities within the project is the work of the Advisory Group of Third-Country Nationals and Persons of Migrant Background. The objective of establishing the Advisory Group is to involve also beneficiaries of international and temporary protection in the processes of designing and monitoring public policies. In the course of 2025, three meetings of the Advisory Group were held, during which members actively participated in discussions. In September 2025, two meetings were organised on the topic of healthcare provision for third-country nationals in the Republic of Croatia. In addition to members of the Advisory Group and representatives of the OHRRNM, participants included representatives of the Croatian Institute of Public Health, the University Hospital for Infectious Diseases “Dr. Fran Mihaljević”, the Croatian Health Insurance Fund, and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia. The third meeting of the Advisory Group was held in November 2025. Alongside members of the Advisory Group and representatives of the OHRRNM, a representative of the Office of the Ombudswoman also participated. The meeting focused on human rights and equality in the Republic of Croatia. Members of the Advisory Group were informed about the role and competences of the Ombudswoman institution, as well as the possibilities and procedures for lodging complaints with that institution.

Furthermore, at the beginning of 2025, cooperation agreements were concluded with four cities: Karlovac, Osijek, Rijeka and Varaždin to establish local coordination mechanisms for the integration of third-country nationals. The agreements are aimed at strengthening the capacities of local self-government units for coordinated multi-level action in the field of the protection and promotion of the rights of third-country nationals. In December 2025, contracts were concluded with external experts in order to provide additional professional support to the aforementioned cities. The experts’ activities include mapping relevant local stakeholders, analysing the existing

⁹¹ Information provided by OHRRNM, 16 February 2026

situation, preparing and delivering training sessions and workshops, and facilitating coordination meetings with the aim of establishing functional local integration mechanisms.

Within the framework of the SINERGY project, cooperation with civil society organisations and international organisations continued, and during 2025 two meetings were held with representatives of these organisations.

During 2025, through the work of the Advisory Group, cooperation with local self-government units, and information exchange with civil society organisations and relevant authorities, certain challenges in the integration of third-country nationals were identified.

In the area of labour market access, challenges persist related to the recognition of foreign qualifications, language barriers, and employers' awareness of the legal status and rights of persons under international and temporary protection. There is also a recognized need for further strengthening coordination between competent authorities at the local and national levels.

Regarding access to healthcare-related rights, difficulties were identified concerning users' awareness of the scope of their rights and the associated administrative procedures.

In 2025, the report "Employment Related Rights of Third-Country Nationals in the Republic of Croatia"⁹² was published. Developed in cooperation with members of the Advisory Group, the report incorporates their perspectives and presents key challenges and obstacles to the exercise of labour rights, and provides recommendations and guidance for addressing them.

6.3. Local integration measures - City of Zagreb



- The City of Zagreb's One-Stop Shop continued operating in 2025 as a central information and support point for refugees and migrants.



- The City funded 11 civil society organisations for integration activities covering language courses, IT workshops, employer–refugee networking, women's empowerment, cultural mediation, and children's programmes.



- In December 2025, the City Assembly adopted the Programme of the City of Zagreb for the Implementation of the Charter of Integrating Cities 2026–2030.

⁹² The report can be accessed online on the OHRRNM website and is available in Croatian: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Integration%20policy%20report%20-%20Employment%20-%20Related%20Rights%20of%20Third-Country%20Nationals%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Croatia.pdf> and English: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e%20o%20politikama%20integracije%20-Prava%20vezana%20uz%20rad%20dr%C5%BEavljana%20tre%C4%87ih%20zemalja%20u%20Republici%20Hrvatskoj.pdf>

After the City of Zagreb and UNHCR Croatia signed a cooperation agreement to open a Welcome Centre (One-stop shop) in September 2024, the One Stop Shop continued to operate in 2025 as a central point for informing refugees and migrants about their rights, obligations, and the services provided by the City of Zagreb.

During 2025, the City of Zagreb continued the implementation of the City of Zagreb Action Plan for the implementation of the Integrating Cities Charter for 2023 and 2024, which was extended until the end of 2025.

The City Assembly of the City of Zagreb, at its 6th session held on 16 December, adopted the Programme of the City of Zagreb for the implementation of the Charter of Integrating Cities for the period 2026–2030.⁹³ The Programme aims to develop sustainable models of integration through accessible services and intercultural programmes, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders. Within the Programme, three specific objectives are highlighted: inclusive and transparent governance of integration policy, strengthening the integration capacities of the City of Zagreb, and raising public awareness alongside the development of intercultural programmes. The measures and activities will be implemented through the Programme's implementation plan, which is currently being prepared.

During 2025, the activities were implemented by the City of Zagreb independently or in cooperation with civil society organizations.

As part of the implementation of integration activities, a Public Call for Expressions of Interest from organizations was launched, through which 11 civil society organizations were funded. The main areas of activity included: free Croatian language courses; IT workshops for preparation for the labour market, including CV and cover letter drafting; networking events connecting employers with foreign workers and persons granted international protection; empowerment programmes for women (applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection and foreign workers); cultural mediation and translation services; workshops for children, awareness-raising among the local population and training for city officials.

In addition to civil society organizations, free Croatian language courses with the possibility of taking an exam and obtaining a certificate of Croatian language proficiency required for regulating status in Croatia, continuing education, or employment were also provided by the Callidus School of Foreign Languages, attended by a total of 172 participants.

Within the framework of the Public Call for the allocation of financial support for the education of secondary school students and university students with granted international or temporary protection for 2024, a total of 75 financial grants in the amount of EUR 2,000.00 were awarded at the beginning of 2025 as support for the education of secondary school pupils and university students with granted international or temporary protection.

The Coordination of the City of Zagreb for the Integration of Foreigners also continued its work in 2025. The Coordination consists of a total of 24 members from the ranks of city

⁹³ City of Zagreb, Programme of the City of Zagreb for the implementation of the Charter of Integrating Cities for the period 2026–2030, available at: <https://www1.zagreb.hr/sluzbeni-glasnik/#/app/akt?id=f608c37c-3585-4a36-b72d-858bcdaa8d98>

administrative bodies, public institutions owned by the City of Zagreb, civil society organizations, religious communities, the academic community, and representatives of migrant groups.

City of Zagreb also reported that the Teaching Institute of Public Health “Dr. Andrija Štampar” implemented a public health intervention programme with the migrant population entitled “Program Zagreb – Healthy Home.” The programme was carried out to collect information on the health and social needs of the migrant population and to provide training for professionals working in the health and social care systems on the epidemiology of certain infectious diseases. At the end of 2025, the Manual for Providing Health Services to Migrant Populations – Cultural Competence in Healthcare was published, aimed at supporting healthcare professionals in delivering more culturally sensitive and higher-quality care.⁹⁴

In addition, the implementation of the project “ALTERNative Education – Intercultural School Lesson” which contributes to reducing prejudice by creating the conditions for building a fair and inclusive society, was implemented during 2025 in 33 Zagreb schools (14 primary and 19 secondary schools), involving approximately 1,100 students as well as 21 workshops at the Youth Centre Ribnjak, with an additional 200 participants.

In 2025, the research „Mapping the Needs of Third-Country Nationals in Zagreb”⁹⁵ was published, conducted within the UNITES – Urban InTEgration Strategies through Co-design project. The research aimed to identify the needs of foreign nationals, including applicants for international protection, persons granted international or temporary protection, and migrant workers holding residence and work permits. The research was carried out using a participatory approach, involving representatives of the target groups, the city administration, and civil society organisations working in the field of integration.

In 2025, two EU-funded integration projects were implemented by the City of Zagreb: CONSOLIDATE – Consolidation, Innovation and Expansion of Effective Integration Practices in Europe, carried out in partnership with the EURO CITIES network and funded by the AMIF, and Plan Einstein Academy, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) within the URBACT IV Programme.

Within the CONSOLIDATE project, an action plan was developed. It includes research and mapping of migrant community needs in city districts, the identification and training of community connectors for informal interpretation and cultural mediation, the development and management of the Welcome Centre’s website and social media, and the preparation of informational materials for foreign workers and users of the Welcome Centre.

Within the Plan Einstein Academy project, a local URBACT group was established in the Novi Zagreb district at the Travno Cultural Centre, in cooperation with civil society organisations Borders: None and Are You Serious?, as well as the Zagreb City Libraries. The initiative aims to involve local residents and people with a migrant background and to decentralise integration

⁹⁴ Teaching Institute of Public Health “Dr. Andrija Štampar”: Manual for providing health services to migrant populations— Cultural competence in healthcare, available at: https://stampar.hr/sites/default/files/2025-12/Prirucnik_zdravstvene_usluge_migranti_12122025.pdf

⁹⁵ Mapping the Needs of Third-Country Nationals in the City of Zagreb for the Development of the City of Zagreb Integration Programme (Evaluation Study), available at: <https://www.zagreb.hr/UserDocsImages/ljudska%20prava/Studija%20-%20Mapiranje%20potreba%20FINAL.pdf>

activities, including the establishment of a Welcome Centre information desk. As a first joint activity, an intercultural music workshop Choir To Go was held in November, fostering intergenerational connection and community building through music from different cultures. An investment plan for the further development of decentralised integration activities is currently being prepared within the project.

7 ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS



• Civil society organisations provided support through free legal aid, psychosocial and mental health support, language and educational integration, labour market assistance, material aid, and capacity-building, with most organisations operating outside reception centres due to restricted access.



• UNICEF and Hrabri telefon expanded mental health support for migrant children and families, with chat counselling made available in six languages.

Civil society and international organizations continued to contribute to the asylum system through activities aimed at improving access to rights and services, supporting applicants and persons granted international and temporary protection, fostering cooperation, raising awareness, and strengthening stakeholder capacities, particularly in segments where challenges persist.

The activities conducted in 2025 by non-governmental and international organizations are summarised below, based on reports delivered to CLC and on other publicly available data.

As stated above, majority civil society organizations lacked access to RCAIP in Zagreb and Kutina and were providing assistance outside the RCAIP.

Throughout 2025, several organizations, including the CLC, the Centre for Peace Studies, the Jesuit Refugee Service, and Borders: None, provided free legal aid to applicants for international protection, persons granted international or temporary protection, and other third-country nationals. Assistance was made available both in person and through remote channels, including telephone, email, and messaging applications, to enhance accessibility for individuals unable to be physically present.

Furthermore, lawyers from those organizations were exceptionally granted access to RCAIP in cases when they were authorized legal representatives for the applicants, and CLC in general, as stated above, was granted access at the end of 2025 following the commencement of a new AMIF project focused on providing legal counselling to applicants.

In the Slavonia region, legal assistance to applicants for international protection, as well as persons under international and temporary protection, was provided by the Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights – Osijek.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Information provided by Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights – Osijek, 26 February 2026.

The social supermarket "Free Shop" continued its work within the Integration Centre of the association Are You Syrious? (AYS). The shop is available to applicants for international protection, persons granted international and temporary protection, as well as to other individuals in need. It provides users with free access to clothing, footwear, hygiene products, and household items. Throughout the year, one-quarter of the shop's beneficiaries were persons under temporary protection who fled Ukraine, followed by nationals of the Russian Federation, Syria, and Türkiye. A significant portion of the users also included individuals who returned to Croatia under the Dublin procedure. Beyond material assistance, AYS conducted four informal beginner-level Croatian language courses for applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection. The association further supported integration by providing employment assistance and individual consultations regarding the realization of rights for persons under international protection. Furthermore, the child support program "Braco i seka" remained active in 2025. Within its framework, volunteers assisted children in mastering school curricula and language acquisition. The program also focused on expanding the children's social networks and facilitating effective communication between parents and educational institutions.⁹⁷

Due to its proximity to the RCAIP in Zagreb, Borders: None continued to work with applicants for international protection as its primary beneficiary group in 2025, alongside persons granted international protection. Most activities were centred in the neighbourhood of RCAIP, focusing on social inclusion through Croatian and English language courses, but organization's efforts also included labour market integration through CV-building workshops and job search consultations, complemented by digital educational programs. Furthermore, a social mentoring program was implemented for individuals aged 18 to 30, alongside the provision of a peer-to-peer community space for youth. To foster integration, various community events were organized to bridge the gap between beneficiaries and the local population.⁹⁸

As an UNHCR implementing partner, and as a part of the support and capacity-building activities for City of Zagreb staff, CLC was present at the One-Stop Shop (Welcome Centre) twice a week in 2025. During these sessions, CLC's lawyers worked directly with users approaching One Stop Shop, providing individual legal counselling and information regarding their rights, obligations, and various procedural matters. In addition, CLC conducted a series of capacity-building and educational activities aimed at key stakeholders within the asylum and migration system. These efforts included two trainings for border police officers on access to international protection and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups, as well as organizing a seminar for administrative judges and MoI's officials regarding the Pact on Migration and Asylum. In addition, lectures on asylum system were held for students at the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Political Science. Additionally, CLC facilitated three Coordination for Asylum meetings, bringing together relevant participants to discuss the upcoming Pact on migration and asylum, the implementation of the Dublin procedure, and the protection of unaccompanied children, thereby fostering cooperation and the exchange of information among relevant stakeholders.

Building on a cooperation agreement concluded in 2024 between the City of Zagreb and the CLC, aimed at strengthening the capacities of City of Zagreb staff in the field of integration and improving service delivery, the CLC delivered a workshop that covered key aspects of the

⁹⁷ Information provided by Are You Syrious, 17 February 2026.

⁹⁸ Information provided by Borders: None, 3 March 2026.

international protection and migration framework, including procedures for granting protection and the rights of applicants and beneficiaries, with a particular focus on the family reunification process, its stages, conditions, and related challenges.

The Centre for Peace Studies (CPS) continued to advance the integration of refugees and migrants through a combination of direct empowerment, legal support, and advocacy. The organization also focused on building the capacity of migrant communities for self-advocacy through targeted workshops. Furthermore, the organization conducted training for journalism students on ethical reporting and provided trainings for public officials, particularly in Međimurje County.⁹⁹

In addition to the activities implemented by the CRC with applicants for international protection in RCAIP, as outlined in Chapter 5.1., the CRC also implemented a range of activities aimed at supporting unaccompanied children, individuals in detention, and persons under temporary protection, while also strengthening the capacities of professionals working in these areas. In cooperation with UNHCR, the MoI, and the Croatian Institute for Social Work – Novi Zagreb Regional Office, two trainings for special guardians of unaccompanied children were organized in Poreč and Osijek. In cooperation with the Education and Teacher Training Agency, regular online trainings were delivered to kindergarten, primary, and secondary school professionals across Croatia, ensuring broad accessibility and participation. Their mobile team carried out 25 visits to residential care institutions across the country, providing support to unaccompanied children. Professional support was also provided in 21 cases to special guardians and institutional staff to strengthen their capacity to work with unaccompanied children. In the field of detention, CRC staff conducted regular visits to the RCF in Ježevo (33 visits) and periodic visits to TRC in Trilj and Tovarnik, depending on needs, where their staff provided psychosocial support and activities related to restoring family links. The CRC also, through Red Cross branches in several counties, continued to provide psychosocial support to displaced persons from Ukraine and individuals granted temporary protection in Croatia. Activities included psychological first aid, counselling (in person and remotely, with interpretation), community-based mental health and psychosocial support, and practical assistance. Additionally, the CRC contributed to supporting wounded veterans from Ukraine and their families.¹⁰⁰

Civil Rights Project Sisak continued to provide support to persons granted international protection through the project *DIDI: Two-way and Dynamic Integration*. The project encompasses the provision of legal, advisory, and educational services.¹⁰¹

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) provided legal, social, and integration support to applicants for international protection, persons granted international and temporary protection. Some of the key activities focused on labour market integration, including employment mediation and the protection of workers' rights. JRS facilitated linguistic and cultural integration through Croatian language courses, 'Coffee with Croatian' sessions, and mediation within public institutions. For the Ukrainian community, support also addressed housing assistance, diploma recognition, and psychological aid. These direct services were reinforced by advocacy and inter-

⁹⁹ Information provided by Centre for Peace Studies. 2 March 2026.

¹⁰⁰ Information provided by Croatian Red Cross, 13 February 2026.

¹⁰¹ Civil Rights Project Sisak: Annual Report for 2025, available at: <https://www.crpsisak.hr/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/PGP-izvjestaj-o-radu-2025.pdf>

institutional coordination aimed at improving access to rights and fostering social cohesion through community-based intercultural events.¹⁰²

As outlined in the Chapter 5.1., in 2025, Mdm-BELGIQUE continued to provide medical support to applicants for international protection at the RCAIP in Zagreb and Kutina.

The Society for Psychological Assistance continued with the implementation of the project “Support in the Integration of Children and Families under International Protection” in Zagreb, in partnership with three primary schools. The project provided weekly support to 13 children under international protection or at risk of social exclusion through trained volunteers, as well as group workshops on learning skills and time management. In addition, 15 asylees received individual psychosocial counselling.¹⁰³

Association SVOJA implemented a comprehensive suite of integration, educational, and psychosocial activities for persons under temporary protection. Key achievements included specialized Croatian language courses that enabled healthcare professionals from Ukraine to initiate diploma nostrification, as well as employment and entrepreneurship workshops conducted in cooperation with the CES. The association further supported integration through a dedicated women's support club, workshops for children, and psychological counselling sessions, while also providing digital access to integration resources via their 'Knowledge Library' on YouTube.¹⁰⁴

The Centre for Missing and Abused Children implemented two projects supporting displaced persons from Ukraine. Both projects focused on social inclusion and integration through variety of activities such as psychosocial support, language courses, creative workshops, counselling and employment-related assistance, as well as educational, legal, and social assistance and support.¹⁰⁵

UNICEF continued the implementation of the programme “Support to Children and Families in Migration in the Process of Protection and Integration in Croatia”, funded by the Government of the Swiss Confederation. Based on insights from unaccompanied children and professionals providing direct support, specialized interventions and materials were developed to strengthen both service providers and children. The activity focused on enhancing the capacities of social service professionals, particularly those working in social welfare institutions and reception centres for applicants for international protection, while also empowering unaccompanied children to recognize risks and access available support services.¹⁰⁶

In collaboration with UNICEF, NGO Hrabri telefon has expanded the availability of mental health and psychosocial support for migrant children and families. Since March 2025, in addition to Croatian, chat counselling has been made available in six additional languages: English, French, Turkish, Ukrainian, Pashto, and Arabic.¹⁰⁷ Recognizing that psychosocial support is not

¹⁰² Information provided by Jesuit Refugee Service, 17 February 2026.

¹⁰³ Information provided by Society for Psychological Assistance, 16 February 2026.

¹⁰⁴ Information provided by Association SVOJA, 28 January 2026.

¹⁰⁵ Information provided by Centre for Missing and Abused Children, 19 March 2026.

¹⁰⁶ Path to Empowerment: Enhancing Services for Children on the Move; Specialized Interventions and Materials for Unaccompanied Children and Professionals; available at: <https://www.unicef.org/croatia/izvjesca/publikacija-put-k-osnazivanju>

¹⁰⁷ The chat is accessible via <https://tinejdzeri.hrabortelefon.hr/> every working day from 9:00 to 20:00.

yet equally accessible to all children despite the efforts of various institutions, the expanded chat service provides a concrete contribution to the protection of migrant families by offering a safe space for dialogue and counselling in languages they understand.

UNHCR supported the projects implemented by CRC and CLC. In addition to the activities supported by UNHCR mentioned elsewhere in this report, UNHCR in Croatia has, among other things, continued its support for SVOJA, Croatia's first refugee-led and women-led organization, which facilitates economic empowerment through job-matching, provides information on self-employment and labour market, and skills training.

Through cooperation with the JRS, the CRC, SVOJA and the Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, UNHCR supported initiatives focused on employment, dignity, and long-term integration.

Namely, UNHCR supported an event organized by JRS under the *Empowerment for Employment* project, which highlighted the employment and integration of refugees and applicants for international protection in Croatia. The event underscored the importance of opportunity, dignity, and inclusion, featuring compelling stories of resilience and success from refugees who overcame significant challenges.

Social and economic inclusion activities were implemented by the CRC and the Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, in partnership with SVOJA. These activities were being carried out across Croatia in cooperation with local authorities, the Croatian Employment Service, and various Chambers of Commerce.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Information provided by UNHCR, 10 April, 2026