



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 March 2025

Original: English

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Croatia*

1. The Committee considered the second periodic report of Croatia¹ at its second and third meetings,² held on 10 and 11 February 2025, and adopted the present concluding observations at its thirtieth meeting, held on 28 February 2025.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission by the State Party of its second periodic report and the supplementary information provided in the replies to the list of issues.³ The Committee appreciates the constructive dialogue that it held with the State Party's delegation.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the legislative, institutional and policy measures taken to increase the protection of economic, social and cultural rights in the State Party, such as the ratification of seven international human rights treaties and optional protocols, the adoption of the Law on the Protection of Whistle-blowers (2022), the Law on Combating Undeclared Work (2022), the Anti-Discrimination Act (2012) and the measures mentioned in the present concluding observations.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

Domestic application of the Covenant

4. While noting the information provided by the State Party regarding the training courses provided for judges and attorneys to raise their awareness of the provisions of the Covenant, the Committee is concerned about the lack of information regarding cases in which the provisions of the Covenant were invoked before or directly applied by domestic courts.

5. **The Committee recommends that the State Party expand training for judges, lawyers and public officials on the provisions of the Covenant and their justiciability with a view to increasing awareness of the Covenant among rights practitioners and rights holders. In that regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant.**

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-seventh session (10–28 February 2025).

¹ [E/C.12/HRV/2](#).

² See [E/C.12/2025/SR.2](#) and [E/C.12/2025/SR.3](#).

³ [E/C.12/HRV/RQ/2](#).



National human rights institution

6. The Committee is concerned that the increasing demand for handling complaints, additional tasks and an expansion of the mandate for the Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia in recent years has not been matched by a corresponding increase in resources, personnel and expansion of the physical premises.

7. **The Committee recommends that the State Party provide the Office of the Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia with adequate financial and human resources to enable it to fully discharge its mandate, including the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights.**

Business and economic, social and cultural rights

8. The Committee is concerned about the absence in the State Party of a specific legal and policy framework to ensure that business entities operating or domiciled in the State Party conduct human rights due diligence and are held accountable for violations of the rights under the Covenant resulting from their activities.

9. **The Committee recommends that the State Party develop and adopt a national action plan, through a consultative and participatory process with stakeholders, to implement the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which will provide a coherent and systematic framework for identifying priority national issues and preventing and mitigating human rights abuses by business entities. In that regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the context of business activities.**

Maximum available resources

10. The Committee is concerned about the State Party's excessive reliance on fluctuating revenues from tourism, making its economy vulnerable to external uncertainties and that revenue from real estate taxation is insufficient. Both issues may hamper the State Party's ability to mobilize its maximum available resources and conduct long-term planning for policies affecting economic, social and cultural rights (arts. 2 (1)).

11. **The Committee recommends that the State Party take measures to diversify its economy in order to reduce its dependence on fluctuating levels of tourism, including by increasing investments in the transition to a green economy with a view to increasing revenue from other sources. The Committee also recommends that the State Party conduct comprehensive assessments of the impact of existing and proposed tax policies, including real estate taxation (see para. 37 on housing), to enable the State Party to more effectively enact policies that advance economic, social and cultural rights.**

Development assistance

12. The Committee welcomes the State Party's enactment of the Law on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2024 but regrets that, despite the increase in official development assistance in recent years, the current level (2023) represents 0.2 per cent of gross national income, a figure below the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent (art. 2 (1)).

13. **The Committee recommends that the State Party increase the share of its gross national income allocated to official development assistance to reach the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent. In that regard, the Committee recalls its statement on the pledge to leave no one behind.⁴**

Climate change mitigation

14. While noting the progress in recent years in increasing the share of the State Party's energy mix comprising renewable energy, the Committee is concerned that current

⁴ E/C.12/2019/1.

emission-reducing policies and administrative approval processes for renewable energy may not be sufficient for the State Party to meet its obligations under the Paris Agreement. The Committee is also concerned that unsustainable practices, including the continued subsidizing of fossil fuels and the continued development of fossil fuel infrastructure, such as the expansion of the liquified natural gas terminal on the island of Krk, are increasing the adverse impacts of climate change beyond the State Party's borders (art. 2 (1)).

15. The Committee recalls its statement on climate change and the Covenant⁵ and recommends that the State Party:

(a) Take enhanced measures to achieve its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement, including by increasing taxation on emissions and abolishing subsidies for fossil fuels;

(b) Continue and accelerate its efforts to replace fossil fuels in its energy mix, including by increasing and accelerating investment in renewable energy as an alternative, reducing bureaucratic obstacles and simplifying approval processes for renewable energy projects;

(c) Expand efforts to improve energy efficiency in industry and buildings, including through tax-deduction incentive schemes.

Non-discrimination

16. The Committee is concerned about reports of the existence of a gap between the officially recorded cases of racial discrimination under the Anti-Discrimination Act and the significantly higher number of cases reported in surveys by ethnic and national minorities and non-citizens. The Committee is also concerned about reports that the resources allocated by the State Party for implementing strategies and policies on racial discrimination are insufficient and that some local authorities are unwilling to effectively enforce legislative and policy frameworks addressing racial discrimination, including the Anti-Discrimination Act (art. 2 (2)).

17. The Committee recommends that the State Party ensure the effective application of its policies aimed at combating discrimination based on nationality or ethnic origin by strengthening its data collection, providing sufficient resources and ensuring the comprehensive enforcement of non-discrimination policies and legal frameworks across the local and regional levels, as also recommended by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.⁶

18. While noting the information provided by the State Party regarding its National Roma Inclusion Plan 2021–2027, the Committee is concerned about reports of the widespread occurrence of hate crimes and racist hate speech, along with the spread of harmful stereotypes targeting Roma and Serbs, both as minority groups and as individuals, including through the media, the Internet and social media platforms (arts. 2 (2)).

19. Recalling its general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Enforce the Anti-Discrimination Act and conduct awareness-raising campaigns targeted at the individuals and groups most susceptible to racial discrimination to inform them about legal protections and improve access to remedies for those affected by such discrimination;

(b) Increase its efforts to counter racist hate speech and hate crimes against Roma and Serbs, including by actively enforcing relevant sections of the Criminal Code and established protocols for handling hate crime cases;

(c) Effectively implement and strengthen existing strategies to monitor and curb the proliferation of racist hate speech across media channels, the Internet and

⁵ E/C.12/2018/1.

⁶ CERD/C/HRV/CO/9-14, para. 8 (b).

social media, working closely with media organizations, Internet service providers, social media platforms and representatives of groups vulnerable to such speech;

(d) **Strongly denounce all forms of hate speech, distance itself from racist rhetoric by politicians and public figures, ensure that instances of hate speech are properly investigated and, if a person is convicted, apply penalties commensurate with the offence.**

Equality between men and women

20. The Committee is concerned about the persistence of gender pay and pension gaps, due to vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the labour market, and the overrepresentation of women in low-paid work, including domestic and care work, and in the informal economy. The Committee is also concerned about the absence of a comprehensive care system, which especially affects women (arts. 3, 6 and 10).

21. **Recalling its general comment No. 16 (2005) on the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Take effective measures to increase women's participation in the labour market, especially in rural areas, and accelerate women's transition to formal work;**

(b) **Ensure that maternity protections for working women also apply to the informal economy;**

(c) **Accelerate efforts to close the gender pay gap and promote the equitable distribution of domestic and care work between women and men;**

(d) **Expand the use of parental leave by men, including flexible work arrangements, and increase efforts to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of childcare and education services throughout the State Party;**

(e) **Establish a comprehensive care system informed by a gender, intersectional, intercultural and human rights perspective.**

Right to work

22. The Committee is concerned about the rise in recent years in unemployment among women and girls with basic education and the high unemployment rates among Roma compared to the general population (arts. 2 (2) and 6).

23. **Recalling its general comment No. 18 (2005) on the right to work, the Committee recommends that the State Party increase its efforts to address unemployment among women, girls with basic education and Roma, for example by implementing targeted public-sector employment schemes, and that it continue its efforts to adjust education to meet the needs of the labour market, such as by expanding vocational training.**

24. The Committee is concerned about reports that persons with disabilities are overrepresented among the unemployed and underemployed relative to their portion of the population. It notes that that disparity is closely linked to a lack of accessible transportation to workplaces and limited awareness of the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation in the workplace, including flexible working hours. In addition, support for work assistants is reportedly infrequently provided and alternative work arrangements are rarely available for persons unable to work a full eight-hour day (arts. 2 (2), 6 and 7).

25. **The Committee recommends that the State Party continue to strengthen its employment policy for persons with disabilities in order to tackle the root causes of their unemployment and underemployment and to implement an action plan with precise, time-bound targets for regularly measuring progress, taking into account the specific needs of persons with disabilities, including ensuring the provision of reasonable accommodation.**

Right to just and favourable conditions of work

26. While noting the legislative measures taken by the State Party to address unregistered work and precarious work, the Committee remains concerned about the inadequate enforcement of labour legislation. It also expresses deep concern over reports that migrant workers, in particular unskilled and low-wage earners in the construction, service, transportation and food-delivery sectors, frequently experience non-payment or the delayed payment of wages, the denial of rest breaks and failure to provide an employment contract. The Committee is also concerned about reports that many migrant workers do not seek remedies for labour rights violations due to fear of retaliation from employers, such as contract termination (arts. 2 (2) and 7).

27. Recalling its general comment No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Increase the number and strengthen the capacities of labour inspectors and other enforcement authorities to prevent, identify and effectively address violations of labour rights, in particular among migrant workers in the construction, service, transportation and food-delivery sectors;**

(b) **Further improve the wage protection system by strengthening its monitoring, enforcement and remedial mechanisms to ensure that employers pay workers' wages on time and in full and impose sanctions against non-compliant employers;**

(c) **Take further measures to ensure accessible mechanisms for workers to file complaints about violations of labour rights, while ensuring their protection against retaliation by their employers.**

Right to social security

28. While noting the State Party's adoption of the new Social Welfare Act in 2022, the Committee is concerned about reports that the level of social assistance benefits, including the guaranteed minimum benefit and the national benefits for older persons, remain inadequate to cover the cost of living. The Committee is also concerned about reports of cases of non-recognition of the right to the guaranteed minimum benefit and administrative delays in approval and payment. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about reports that the guaranteed minimum benefit is conditional on providing 60–90 hours of labour per month, with no exemptions for illness, and that that requirement is implemented inconsistently across the territory of the State Party (arts. 7, 9, 11 and 12).

29. Recalling its general comment No. 19 (2007) on the right to social security, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Take measures to ensure that the levels of the guaranteed minimum benefit and national benefits for older persons are adequate, including by establishing an effective and transparent indexation system;**

(b) **Review the procedures for guaranteed minimum benefit approval and payment with a view to ensuring their effectiveness;**

(c) **Revise the conditionalities for receiving the guaranteed minimum benefit, including by granting exemptions in cases of illness and ensuring the coherent implementation of the guaranteed minimum benefit in all parts of the territory of the State Party.**

Social care services

30. The Committee is concerned about the inadequate availability of quality, affordable long-term care services for older persons, particularly in small towns and rural areas (arts. 9 and 10).

31. The Committee recommends that the State Party intensify its efforts to ensure that older persons have access to affordable, quality long-term care, supported by adequate and qualified personnel, including in small towns and rural areas.

Protection of the family and children

32. The Committee is concerned about reports that harmful traditional practices persist in Roma communities, including practices that perpetuate child marriage, and that such practices also have a negative impact on the physical and mental health and well-being of girls (art. 10).

33. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Strengthen measures to eliminate child marriage by adopting a comprehensive approach that addresses its root causes, including by providing social benefits for continued education, raising awareness of relevant legislation and conducting widespread educational campaigns at the community level, especially targeting Roma community leaders about the harmful effects of early marriage;**

(b) **Ensure the prompt, independent and impartial investigation and prosecution of all cases of child marriage, establish penalties for those who perform or facilitate child marriage and ensure access to effective remedies and other forms of necessary protection for victims.**

Right to an adequate standard of living

34. Noting the information provided by the State Party regarding the Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2021–2024, the Committee is concerned about the rising inflation of recent years and about reports that the at-risk-of-poverty rate has increased and remains high for single-parent families, Roma and older persons, particularly for older single women and single-woman households in rural areas (arts. 2 (2), 9 and 11).

35. **The Committee urges the State Party to redouble its efforts to address poverty, paying particular attention to single-parent families, Roma and older persons, in particular single-woman households in rural areas, including by considering an increase in direct cash transfers to the most disadvantaged and marginalized. In that regard, the Committee recalls its statement on poverty and the Covenant.⁷**

Right to adequate housing

36. Noting the information provided regarding pending legislation on affordable housing, the Committee is concerned about reports of the rise in recent years in the cost of housing and a deficit of adequate and affordable housing. The Committee is also concerned that current policies, including tax policies regarding real estate ownership, contribute to reducing the supply of houses and apartments for purchase or long-term rental. The Committee is further concerned about reports that a significant percentage of migrant workers live in substandard or overcrowded conditions and that they are particularly at risk of exploitative practices by landlords and of homelessness (arts. 2 (2) and 11).

37. **Recalling its general comment No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Expedite the adoption of the draft Affordable Housing Act;**

(b) **Review real estate taxation legislation with a view to increasing the supply of housing units for sale and long-term rental;**

(c) **Review the legislative and administrative framework with a view to accelerating the process of granting construction and renovation permits;**

(d) **Prioritize funding for the construction of new and affordable housing units, including social housing, and for renovating and modernizing substandard housing units;**

(e) **Consider introducing measures aimed at private, commercial lending to control rents and strengthen oversight and enforcement mechanisms to prevent**

⁷ [E/C.12/2001/10](#).

exploitation by landlords and reduce the risk of homelessness, including for migrant workers.

38. The Committee is concerned about the severe poverty and poor living conditions experienced by Roma communities in de facto segregated areas and informal settlements, which lack adequate infrastructure and essential services. The Committee is also concerned about the practice of demolishing homes and conducting forced evictions, without offering appropriate alternative housing or compensation to affected Roma individuals and families (arts. 2 (2) and 11).

39. **Recalling its general comment No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions and its statement on the right to sanitation,⁸ the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Provide durable, adequate housing solutions to persons, including Roma, living in informal settlements and, in the meantime, improve their living conditions and access to safe drinking water, water for general consumption, sanitation facilities, healthcare, education, public transport, electricity and waste disposal and other services;**

(b) **Take the legislative and administrative steps necessary to guarantee the availability of effective legal safeguards against arbitrary land expropriation and forced evictions;**

(c) **Ensure that evictions, when unavoidable, are carried out in accordance with due process of law, are preceded by consultation with the persons concerned and consideration of alternatives, are subject to appeal and result in adequate compensation or the provision of adequate alternative housing.**

Climate change adaptation

40. The Committee notes the information provided by the State Party regarding the long-term National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation in the Republic of Croatia for the Period up to 2040 with a view to 2070. The Committee is concerned, however, that the resources allocated may be insufficient to adequately prevent the negative impacts of climate change on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular regarding water supply and drought preparedness, which may disproportionately affect persons with disabilities, persons affected by poverty, older persons, persons with health issues, peasants, fisherfolk and outdoor and agricultural workers (art. 11).

41. **The Committee recommends that the State Party significantly increase the resources dedicated to building the resilience of its society and its economy, in particular the agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors, to water scarcity and environmental shocks. Actions could include expanding tree-planting programmes, constructing desalination plants and increasing the number and capacity of wastewater treatment plants. In that regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 15 (2002) on the right to water.**

Right to health

42. Noting the information provided by the State Party regarding the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021–2026, the Committee is concerned about reports of shortages of healthcare personnel, particularly nurses and doctors, and that those shortages are reportedly due to low wages, resulting in the migration of healthcare personnel to obtain higher salaries (arts. 6, 7 and 12).

43. **The Committee recommends that the State Party take all measures necessary to alleviate the shortages of nurses and doctors, including by considering raising their salaries and offering appropriate incentives for them to remain in their posts. In that regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 14 (2000) on the right to the highest attainable standard of health.**

⁸ [E/C.12/2010/1](#).

44. The Committee is concerned about reports that a smaller proportion of Roma are covered by the mandatory health insurance scheme compared to the general population. The Committee is also concerned about reports that their general state of health is disproportionately poorer compared to the general population, which is reportedly coupled with their limited access to healthcare services, including because of spatial segregation (arts. 2 (2), 11 and 12).

45. **The Committee recommends that the State Party increase health insurance coverage, including by considering the subsidizing of schemes for groups and persons who are disproportionately overrepresented among those without health insurance, including Roma. The Committee also recommends that the State Party increase funding for basic healthcare services in regions and areas with limited access to such services, with a view to bridging the gap between the Roma community and the general population and ensuring equal access to healthcare.**

46. Noting the information provided by the State Party regarding the right to abortion, the Committee is concerned about reports that access to abortion services is, in some instances, restricted by the refusal of individual doctors citing conscientious objections, by the high cost of the procedure and the necessary medications and the lack of referral in cases of refusal (art. 12).

47. **The Committee recommends that the State Party guarantee access to abortion services, expand and facilitate appropriate referral services and ensure that the exercise of conscientious objection by healthcare personnel does not pose an obstacle for women who wish to terminate a pregnancy. In that regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 22 (2016) on the right to sexual and reproductive health.**

48. The Committee is concerned about reports that, to obtain and maintain health insurance, unemployed persons are required to be physically present at the premises of the relevant authorities at regular intervals. That practice may constitute discrimination against persons with disabilities, older persons and persons in situations of poverty, as such persons may not be able to meet such demands. The Committee is also concerned that decisions taken by the relevant authorities that result in the denial of health insurance cannot be appealed by the persons concerned, which may be in violation of the State Party's constitutional right to health (art. 58) and the Covenant (arts. 2 (2) and 12).

49. **The Committee recommends that the State Party review its legislative and administrative framework concerning the rules for granting, continuing and terminating health insurance for unemployed persons, including the general demand for the physical presence of all claimants, and instituting a right of appeal against the decisions of the authorities.**

Right to education

50. The Committee is concerned about reports of low school attendance among Roma children in primary and secondary education, alongside their high dropout rates at both the primary and secondary levels, and ongoing de facto segregation of Roma children in education, the so-called Roma-only classes, particularly in Međimurje County (arts. 2 (2), 13 and 14).

51. **The Committee recommends that the State Party redouble its efforts to reduce the school dropout rate, paying particular attention to ensure that Roma children enjoy equal opportunities with other children in access to quality primary education. The Committee also recommends that the State Party take immediate measures to end the de facto practice of the so-called Roma-only classes. In that regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 13 (1999) on the right to education.**

Cultural rights

52. The Committee is concerned about reports of instances of vandalism targeting Serbian cultural monuments and Orthodox churches in various cities.

53. **The Committee recommends that the State Party take adequate measures to protect the cultural and religious sites of ethnic and religious minorities and conduct**

awareness-raising campaigns for the general public with a view to promoting and increasing tolerance for cultural diversity. In that regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 21 (2009) on the right of everyone to take part in cultural life.

D. Other recommendations

54. The Committee encourages the State Party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

55. The Committee recommends that the State Party consider ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

56. The Committee also recommends that the State Party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, including in the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would be significantly facilitated by the State Party establishing independent mechanisms to monitor progress and treating beneficiaries of public programmes as rights holders who can claim entitlements. Moreover, the Committee recommends that the State Party support the global commitment of the decade of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementing the Goals on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination would ensure that no one is left behind. In this regard, the Committee draws the State Party's attention to its statement on the pledge to leave no one behind.⁹

57. The Committee further recommends that the State Party take steps to progressively develop and apply appropriate indicators on the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in order to facilitate the assessment of progress achieved by the State Party in complying with its obligations under the Covenant for various segments of the population. In that context, the Committee refers the State Party to, *inter alia*, the conceptual and methodological framework on human rights indicators developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹⁰

58. The Committee requests that the State Party disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, including at the national, regional and local levels, in particular among parliamentarians, public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee emphasizes the crucial role that Parliament plays in implementing the present concluding observations and encourages the State Party to ensure its involvement in future reporting and follow-up procedures. The Committee encourages the State Party to continue engaging with the Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia and to engage with non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the follow-up to the present concluding observations and in the process of consultation at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.

59. In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State Party is requested to provide, within 24 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations (31 March 2027), information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 25 (employment for persons with disabilities), 29 (a) (guaranteed minimum benefit) and 37 (a) (Affordable Housing Act) above.

⁹ E/C.12/2019/1.

¹⁰ HRI/MC/2008/3.

60. The Committee requests the State Party to submit its third periodic report in accordance with article 16 of the Covenant by 31 March 2030, unless otherwise notified as a result of a change in the review cycle. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words.
