

1. INTRODUCTION

A workgroup was established to draft this report. It was made up of representatives from the Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, National Committee for the Fight Against HIV/AIDS, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Economy, Labor and Entrepreneurship, Office of the Ombudsman for Children, as well as two representatives of civic associations directly involved in working with children, which informed the civil society about the report and in cooperation with them made a number of valuable attachments for the report.

Other authorities like the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Culture, National Inspectorate, etc., also participated in the drafting of this report within the scope of their competencies as per certain thematic issues. Particular thanks goes out to all participants in the making of this report and those who aided the workgroup, such as organizations like UNICEF for Croatia, as testimony of good cooperation and partnership between the Government and civil society pertaining to the protection of the rights of the child and looking out for its best interests.

The members of the Government of the Republic of Croatia Council for Children, as an inter-departmental working body that coordinated and harmonized the activities of the appropriate authorities in the field of promotion and protection of the rights of the child also participated by supervising the drafting process of this report.

The drafting of this report was mostly based on:

- National Action Plan for Rights and Interests of Children 2006-2012 (NPA), passed by the Government of the Republic of Croatia on March 22, 2006;
- Publishing materials from the Report on the Application of Measures of the NPA prepared by the Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity;
- Report on the Application of Priority Activities for the Wellbeing of Children 2003-2005, which was prepared by the Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity in October 2005 and was accepted by the Council for Children at a session held on November 20, 2005;
- Report on the Progress and Completion of the Millennium Development Goals August 2004-December 2005;
- Report on the Progress and Completion of the Millennium Development Goals (period up to 2006);
- Responses of the Republic of Croatia to the Questionnaire for the UN General Secretary Study of Violence Against Children;
- UNDP Report on Poverty, Unemployment, and Social Exclusion from 2006;
- Report on the Activities of the Fight Against HIV/AIDS Infections in 2004 with an activity overview for 2005;
- Annual statistics report from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CROSTAT);
- Available data from the Ministry of Finance;

In accordance to the recommendations for marking the fifth anniversary of the "World Fit for Children" document, the Government of the Republic of Croatia will, in cooperation and partnership with civil society associations applying the programs for children, as well as with the support of UNICEF for Croatia, organize a series of events and activities in connection to the promotion of WFFC goals. Children will be included in the aforementioned activities.

Item 2. Main National Activities for Children and Activities as per the Goals of the “World Fit for Children” (WFFC) Action Plan from 2002

(International level activities)

The Republic of Croatia is a stakeholder in almost all UN instruments pertaining to the protection of the rights of the child including: Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); Facultative Protocol with the CRC as per including children in armed conflict; Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime including the Protocol for the Prevention, Combating and Punishing the Smuggling of People, particularly women and children; as well as the UN Convention on Alimony in Foreign Countries. Along with the aforementioned, the Republic of Croatia is a party to numerous conventions from the International Labor Organization, among which we would point out the Convention on the Prohibition and Immediate Action against Child Labor and the Convention on the Minimum Permitted Age for Employment. As far as private law is concerned, the Republic of Croatia is party to the Convention on the Civic Legal Aspects of International Child Kidnapping.

In 2004 the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child reviewed the Second Periodical Report of the Republic of Croatia as per the Convention of the Rights of the Child, while the Third Periodical Report of Croatia will be prepared for 2008. The initial report according to the Facultative Protocol on the Inclusion of Children in Armed Conflict was tendered by Croatia in November 2006. The report renders an overview of legislative and administrative measures in the Republic of Croatia pertaining to the rights guaranteed by the protocol and particularly emphasizes that Croatian legislation prohibits drafting minors into the military. In 2004 Croatia sent responses to the Questionnaire of the UN General Secretary on Violence against Children.

In connection to achieving the goals of the WFFC, Croatia actively participates at all international gatherings including those of a regional character. As per the aforementioned, after the Second World Summit dedicated to children (particularly the session of the UN General Assembly) at which the WFFC was passed, Croatia was a participant at the regional meeting held in Sarajevo in 2004 where European and Central Asian countries reviewed the application of their obligations as per the said document. Furthermore, in 2005, Croatia was present at the Regional Conference “Combating Sexual Exploitation of the Child” in Ljubljana, as well as at the conference held due to the drafting of the UN Study on Violence against the Child “Stop Violence against Children – Take Action Now”. We have to point out that during the drafting process of the National Action Plan for the Rights and Interests of Children 2006-2012, special attention was paid to the priorities and initiatives of the Council of Europe on the protection of children, i.e. the document of the Council of Europe “Program for Building a Europe For and With Children”.

(Application of the Millennium Development Goals)

Midway through 2003 Croatia actively began implementing the UN Millennium Declaration, defining Millennium Development Goals (MDG) on a national level. To that end the drafting of the first National Report on the Implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration was done in July 2004, as a result of cooperation between the appropriate ministries and other national authorities, non-governmental organizations and numerous experts, as well as the UNDP Program in Croatia. What followed was the Report on the Progress and Achievement of Millennium Development Goals in the Republic of Croatia (for the period August 2004-December 2005), which differed from its predecessor inasmuch as it included clearly defined statistical data for the further monitoring of progress in achieving the MDG up to 2015. The application of the MDG in Croatia will be achieved through integrated primary and secondary development goals of the national strategy, as well as priorities linked to the EU pre-accession process and by linking national priorities to global goals. As a candidate to enter the EU, Croatia has the opportunity to monitor its progress toward reaching the MDG through regular reports and to join contemporary trends of social and economic development. By 2015 the Government, in cooperation with the civil society, will draft further progress reports on the application of the MDG.

(Implementation of the National Plan for Children)

In the aim of protecting the wellbeing of children, their upbringing and development, in 1998 the Government passed the National Activity Program for Children in the Republic of Croatia. In 2003 it passed Priority Activities for the Wellbeing of Children 2003-2005. In March 2006 the National Action Plan for Rights and Interests of Children 2006-2012 was passed. It represents an all encompassing action strategy for the protection of the rights of the child in Croatia in the upcoming period. The said document includes the recommendations of the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child delivered to the Republic of Croatia based on the Second Periodical Report According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We should point out that it was passed while taking into account the standards set in the WFFC document and the Government used it as a guiding light for passing other documents pertaining to the rights of the child. The rudimentary goals of the National Action Plan for Rights and Interests of Children 2006-2012 are defined in 14 fields of activities including: upbringing and education, health, nutrition, role of the family in the rearing and upbringing of children, social welfare, children with behavioral disorders, ethnic minority children, children – victims of trade, children with special needs, abused and neglected children, children that suffered through the war and the consequences of war, free time and culture for children, the media, as well as the Republic of Croatia finding its bearings in the application of its accepted international obligations pertaining to the rights of the child. The implementation of the 124 measures include the participation of all authorized state administration bodies, local and regional governments, along with the media and civil society associations with programs for improving the position and protection of the rights of the child in the Republic of Croatia.

(Activities on the national level since 2002)

In the Republic of Croatia children enjoy special protection as stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia¹ and a whole series of legislation, particularly the Family Act.123. In the Republic of Croatia children enjoy special protection as stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia¹ and a whole series of legislation, particularly the Family Act (NN # 116/03, 17/04, 136/04), Act on Protection Family Violence (NN # 116/03), Welfare Act (NN # 73/97, 27/01, 59/01, 82/01, 103/03 and 44/06), Baby Bonus Act (NN # 94/01, 138/06), Act on Maternity Leave for Self-Employed and Unemployed Mothers (NN # 24/96, 109/97, 82/01 and 30/04), acts pertaining to upbringing and education, labor laws, legislation on health insurance and healthcare, as well as legislation that regulates penal code protection of children.

In accordance to the Act on the Ombudsman for Children, which came to force on June 18, 2003 (NN # 96/03) the Republic of Croatia established the Office of the Ombudsman for Children as a separate supervisory entity tasked with the protection, monitoring and promotion of the rights and interests of children based on the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, as well as international agreements and legislation. The ombudsman for children is an independent entity that adheres to the principles of justice and morality.

¹ Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (NN # 56/90, 135/97, 8/98, 113/00, 124/00, 28/01, 41/01 and 55/01) as stipulated in Article 64, Paragraph 1 that it is *“the duty of all to protect children and those who are helpless.”*

² Act on Preschool education (NN # 10/97), Act on Elementary School Education (NN # 59/90,26/93,27/93,29/94,7/96,59/01 and 114/01), Act on Secondary School Education (NN # 19/92, 26/93, 27/93, 50/95, 59/01,114/01 and 81/05), Act on Upbringing and Education in the Language and Script of Ethic Minorities (NN # 51/00, 56/00 - correction).

³ Penal Code (NN # 110/97, 27/98, 129/00, 51/01, 111/03, 105/04 and 71/06), Act on Penal Processing (NN # 110/97, 27/98 – correction, 58/99, 112/99,58/02, 143/02 – correction, 115/06), Act on Youth Court (NN # 111/97, 27/98 – correction, 12/02), Misdemeanor Act (NN # 88/02, 122/02, 187/03, 105/04, and 127/04 - correction), Act on Combating Drug Abuse (NN # 107/01, 87/02, 163/03, 141/04 and 40/07), Act on the Protection of Persons with Psychological Disturbances (NN # 111/97, 27/98 – correction, 128/99 and 79/02).

The Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity was formed after organizational changes to the state administration in 2003, which in turn established organizational units dedicated to the application and protection of the rights and wellbeing of children.

The Government, during the period 2002-2006, passed a whole series of strategies, program and protocols among which are:

- National Family Policy (2003)
- Priority Activities for the Welfare of Children 2003-2005
- Activity Program for the Prevention of Violence among Children and Youths (2004)
- Protocol on Procedures in Cases of Violence among Children and Youths (2004)
- National Strategy to Combat Family Violence 2005-2007
- Protocol on Procedures in Cases of Family Violence (2005, changes and amendments 2006)
- National Program for the Roma Minority (2003)
- Decade Action Plan for the Inclusion of the Roma Minority 2005-2015
- National Plan to Combat Trading in People 2005-2008
- National Plan to Combat Trading in Children October 2005-December 2007
- Rearing and Education System Development Plan 2005-2010
- National Road Safety Program 2006-2010, which includes activities to protect children in traffic
- National Strategy for a Uniform Policy for Disabled Persons 2003-2006
- National Program for Youth Activities (2003)
- National Healthcare Development Strategy 2006-2011
- National Strategy for the Fight against Drug Abuse in the Republic of Croatia 2006-2012
- Croatian National Program for the Prevention of HIV/AIDS 2005-2010
- National Population Policy (2006)

The Program to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion was passed in 2002, as well as the Job Creation Incentive Program. Furthermore, within the framework of activities as per the European Union Pre-accession Strategy for the Republic of Croatia in the field of social inclusion, the Republic of Croatia drafted the "Joint Inclusion Memorandum of the Republic of Croatia" (JIM-RH) that the Government and the European Commission cosigned in March 2007. This document identified the principle challenges and measures that will help Croatia in its fight against poverty and social exclusion.

In the field of ensuring good quality education, we should point out the passing of the Croatian National Education Standard (HNOS) that represents a steppingstone of a new curriculum and program introduced to all elementary schools in the 2006/2007 school year. Closely linked to that is the professional training of teachers, headmasters and professional associates carried out 2004-2006. There are ongoing preparations for the gradual introduction of mandatory secondary school education, primarily through a series of incentives (facilitate free textbooks, transportation and accommodation in student dormitories), as well as a proposal for a National Program of Measures to Facilitate Mandatory Secondary School Education. We would like to emphasize that Croatia is the only country in Europe that allows school children completely free Internet access in schools.

As far as healthcare is concerned, substantial improvement was the passing of the new Plan and Program of Measures for Healthcare Protection in 2006, as well as the introduction of "Children's healthcare booklets" in the aim of continual monitoring of the growth and development, as well as the health condition and immunization of each individual child from birth to his/her 18th birthday.

In the framework of the fight against HIV/AIDS, it is important to point out the ongoing continuous education of the general population with an emphasis on the respect of human rights and accepting the principles of non-discrimination and destigmatization. Priority in the national program has been given to measures and treatment of those infected with HIV. Modern antiretroviral treatment has been free of charge since April 1998. All Croatian

citizens have the right to health insurance that also includes the treatment of HIV. Special measures have been instituted that are dedicated to the protection and treatment of pregnant women infected with HIV with a right to antiretroviral treatment. Furthermore, persons infected with HIV have the right to free psychosocial assistance in centers for the treatment of HIV/AIDS. HIV testing in Croatia is voluntary, free of charge and available to all.

3. Earmarking Trends for Funds Meant for Children

Considerable funds are earmarked in the Croatian National Budget for programs meant for the affirmation of rights and the protection of children. We are publishing the expenditures of a part of budget funds earmarked for children in the systems of: upbringing and education (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports), social welfare (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare) and family, children and youths (Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity). Attached is the Ministry of Finance report on expenditures of the majority of the budget funds earmarked for children for period 2002-2006.

1. In the system of science, upbringing and education in the period 2003-2007, funds from the budget of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports were increased by 34.21% (2.6 billion HRK). The planned development and education is also supported by the World Bank and to that end it granted a €67.8 million loan.

Overview of spent funds in the system of elementary and secondary education (2003-2007) in HRK⁴

System	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Growth %
Primary Education	3,192,336	3,522,671	3,635,402	3,849,658	4,113,155	28.8
Secondary Education	1,605,945	1,745,752	1,872,009	1,993,272	2,032,587	26.7

In the ministry budget for 2007 funds were earmarked for a pay increase for those employed in the system of education and science amounting to 447 million HRK and funds for new jobs in primary and secondary education institutions. From 2004-2006 there were 5,259 new jobs created in education and science, which is the highest job increase in this system.

Overview of new jobs in the system of education and science (2004-2006)

	System	Number of New Jobs	Number of New Jobs for Newbie Scientists
1.	Primary Education	1,775	
2.	Secondary Education	791	
3.	Higher Education	1,313	930
4.	Science	100	350
	TOTAL	3,979	1,280

A project for the construction of schools has been initiated with the joint funding of the National Budget and a loan from the World Bank, along with funds from the EIB II (European Investment Bank) and CEB V (Council of Europe Development Bank), as well as public-private partnerships. Some 253 schools received funding for their construction or

⁴ On 12/29/2006 applied since 12/30/2006 the mean exchange rate of the Croatian National Bank for USD was 5.578401 HRK.

reconstruction 2004-2006 (some 40 schools on islands). Joint funding from the National Budget and a loan from the World Bank will facilitate the continued construction or reconstruction of schools.

2. In the social welfare system we present an overview of spent funds from the National Budget of the Republic of Croatia for the period 2002-2006 concerning institutions of social welfare offering aid to children outside of their own families.

	Execution 2002	Execution 2003	Execution 2004	Execution 2005	Execution 2006
Care for physically and mentally disabled children	197,726,930	228,977,771	225,361,313	242,500,975	250,015,119
Care for children lacking necessary parental care	69,301,000	78,477,182	74,736,798	77,251,395	81,951,432
Care for children and youths with behavioral disturbances	58,078,000	66,412,204	60,427,532	65,119,013	67,395,643
TOTAL	325,105,930	373,867,157	360,525,643	384,871,383	399,362,194

The Ministry of Healthcare and Social Welfare has initiated the Social Welfare Development Project aimed at modernizing the system and its harmonization with the criteria and standards in European Union member countries. To that end, in 2005 a contract was signed with the World Bank for a loan of €31 million (in force since January 31, 2006). To the same end in 2006 a donation contract was signed with Swedish International Agency for Development and Cooperation amounting to 2 million USD (approx. €1.6 million). Total costs of the project are €47 million, of which the Government has earmarked €14 million.

3. In the system of the protection of the family, children and youths, we would like to point out: overview of partial expenditures earmarked for families 2002-2006.

PAYMENTS EARMARKED FOR FAMILIES

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Baby Bonus	1,725,263,836	1,599,877,236	1,508,866,316	1,435,018,283	1,358,654,487
Additional Parental Leave (after the 6 th month child's life) and accessories for infant care	376,098,736	432,064,663	379,269,215	718,045,400	785,421,178
TOTAL	2,101,362,572	2,031,941,899	1,888,135,531	2,153,063,683	2,144,075,665

SUBSIDY FOR PROGRAMS MEANT FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Social strengthening of family and youths	2.595.050	4.525.773	4.232.373	4.134.764	4.407.875
Affirmation of rights and protection of children	239.535	350.764	1.542.638	1.363.733	1.531.470
Protection of family violence			1.022.759	1.130.252	1.129.380

Family and population policy		2.884.875	3.207.241	4.685.988	3.947.663
Programs meant for children and youths	860.973			15.733.506	14.254.645
TOTAL	3,695,558	7,761,412	10,005,011	27,048,243	25,271,033

Item 4. Development and Use of WFFG and MDG Monitoring Instruments

(WFFC monitoring)

WFFC monitoring is indirectly being applied through the realization of measures from the National Action Plan for Rights and Interests of Children 2006-2012 (from herein: NPA).

While passing the NPA particular attention was paid to its stipulating monitoring modalities at all levels. Thus, local and regional governments (from herein: LRG) formed coordinating bodies to monitor and implement NPA measures made up of members from:

- Social Activities Department in the State Administration Office in counties,
- Appropriate city education offices (departments),
- Social welfare centers and counseling centers for children and youths, marriage and family, i.e. family centers.

Furthermore, NPA foresees that LRG hold coordination meetings that also include experts and representatives from civil society organizations that partake in activities aimed at the protection of the rights and interests of children. Moreover, cooperation among those entities is foreseen, as well as cooperation with other state entities and as necessity warrants, cooperation with religious communities and experts in specific fields of child rights protection. All the aforementioned entities are expected to respect the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, such as the best interests of the child, accepting his/her opinions, etc.

The NPA establishes a structure and methodology for monitoring so that:

- permanent monitoring by the Council for Children;
- state administrative bodies on the national, local and regional levels must apply measures, notifying all other stakeholders in the NPA, facilitate its implementation and draft reports on their fields of responsibility by January 31 every year;
- the Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity as the coordinator of the overall application is tasked with drafting a uniform annual report and send it to the Government for passing.

Concerning methodology, we would like to point out that it has identified the main difficulties and possible lacks as far as desired standards are concerned through its description of the state of affairs. Hence, goals were set and measures taken to monitor the activities, as well as indicators for their successful implementation. This also includes defining the carriers of the drafts, deadlines and funding.

We would like to emphasize that all entities tasked with the implementation of NPA measures are obligated to include in their annual work plans and secure the necessary funds each year from the National Budget for their application. All of the abovementioned eases the continued supervision over the implantation process.

There are other institutional mechanisms aside from the Council for Children that were established with the aim of advancing and promoting the rights of children and youths, as well as the rights of persons with disabilities. These include expert advisory bodies of the Government of the Republic of Croatia: Youth Counseling, Committee for the Prevention of Behavioral Disorders in Children and Youths, as well as the Committee of the Government of Croatia for Persons with Disabilities.

(MDG monitoring)

The definition of the MDG on the national level in 2003 (eight primary national goals and 31 secondary goals) adapted to the specific circumstances and conditions of our development, as well as the drafting of an action plan for their application in 2005, which includes: information on the way the goals are planned to be reached, precisely defined indicators, statistic data and assessments of what was done/planned, Croatia joined the international intentions to meet the key developmental goals for the wellbeing of mankind in the 21st century. The MDG Implementation Budget has also been completed in Croatia, indicating the state of affairs of the fields included in the MDG, namely whether there are already programs funded and what amounts they may require. Up to now Croatia has done two reports on MDG implementation (see: Introduction). The reports on the improvement of the situation serve to determine future priorities, initiate permanent monitoring and reporting on the achieved rudimentary goals. Clearly defined statistical indicators from the second report are a steppingstone toward the direction for detailed monitoring of further progress in achieving the MDG by 2015, while being harmonized with the long term measure to be taken by Croatia. This will facilitate a uniform methodology as the true reflection of what was achieved in practice, i.e. the qualitative and quantitative overview of indicators compared in differing monitoring periods.

The aforementioned methodology of applying the 8 MDG includes:

- description of the situation as prepared by the appropriate entities, which includes the current situation, what has been done up to now and future projections of trends, as well as describing the situation with the secondary goals with concrete indicators;
- activities like concrete measures meant for reaching primary and secondary goals which propose defined measures, frequently also to achieve priorities (key measures, desired measures or very desired measures):
- challenges and recommendations in the sense of the necessity of including the general community, strengthening all forms of prevention, as well as further projections and drafting of new concepts, analysis and effective strategies in certain fields included in MDGs. This also includes the strengthening of capacities in all national mechanisms in reaching clearly defined national interests that are part and parcel with MDG implantation.

The Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity, in cooperation with scientific and other institutions, conducted surveys on demographic processes and their causes, family structures and inter-family relations 2002-2006: "Causes and Consequences of Social Sterility in Croatia"; "Structure of Family Trends in the 20th Century"; "Development of the Population and Changes in Family Structure in Croatia"; "Model Diagnostic – Advisory Monitoring of Early Childhood Development and Support of Families with Small Children"; "Structure of Roma Families and the Idea of Parenthood in them"; "Actors of Demographic Trends in the Republic of Croatia"; "Basic Characteristics of Demographic Development in Croatia (20th Century Balance)"; "Social Sterility in Croatia – Why we Don't have Spouses".

The results of the aforementioned surveys provided a foundation for passing measures within the framework of drafting national strategies, programs and plans pertaining to family and population policy.

Item 5 – Enhancing partnerships and associations for children and participation

(Associations for children)

Many non-governmental associations work in Croatia, implementing programs dedicated to children, and a large share of children programs of non-governmental associations is financed from the budget on the national and local level.

The development of nongovernmental sector in the qualitative and quantitative sense resulted in 2004 with the integration of associations implementing programs for children in a Coordination of children's associations (32 members), with the intent to develop a

partnership with state institutions and enhance cooperation between associations. Cooperation between associations contributed to the quality, professionalism and education of association members, and to the strengthening and joint work on the promotion and preservation of the rights of the child. Inclusion of children in the evaluation of work and program planning resulted in the improvement of the quality of work in most associations.

In 1950, the Union of Societies Our Children of Croatia was established (the Union of SOC) as an association for children assembling parents and citizens prepared to share their knowledge and experience and offer it to children on voluntary basis, through the organization of different activities and actions with children and for children, particularly in their free time. The Union's program activities are mostly directed to children from birth til the end of primary education and to providing support to parents in the development and upbringing of children. Activities of the Union of SOC are conducted through Our Children societies established in cities and municipalities (96). In cooperation with bodies of government administration and professional associations, the Union of SOC conducts program intended for children, whose quality was recognized and they were included in measures of the NPA, such as:

“For a Smile of a Child in Hospital” – program of humanization of hospital treatment of children, in accordance with the realization of the international idea of “open hospital”. Thirty-five health institutions (hospitals) are participating in this action, and the honorary title “Hospital, a friend of children” was awarded to 9 hospitals.

Action “Cities and municipalities – friends of children” – is conducted with the goal of motivating large numbers of adults on local level to fully realize programs affirming the rights and protection of children in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The action has 10 program areas and 123 propositions. City/municipality that realizes at least 80% of the scope obtains the honorary title city/municipality friend of children. A signboard at the entrance of a city/municipality marks the holder of the honorary title. The action included 65 cities and municipalities and was conducted in cooperation with and with the financial support of the Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity.

Participation of children in the life of local community is enhanced by Children forums (70 and growing) that serve as a framework for participation of children age 9-14 in workshops, where they are learning about children rights in an accessible and interesting manner and with the help of a supervisor. This knowledge is used as a foundation for arrangement and implementation of adequate activities in local communities and the initiation of contact and cooperation with their peers around the world. At annual meetings with members of the Croatian Parliament, representatives of Children forums state their observations, opinions and proposals for chosen issues important for better and faster satisfaction of children's needs and realization of the rights of the child. Furthermore, a meeting of Children forums takes place every year, where members are presenting achievements, exchanging experiences and arranging new contents and actions.

Children city/municipality councils – program activities referring to the integration of children in the life of local community. Guidelines for the program structure and activities are being developed by the Union of SOC.

Representatives of the Coordination of Associations for Children, the Union of SOC, and other associations actively participate in the activities of the Council for children on the drafting of strategies, programs and plans intended for children, contributing to the progress of implementation of the Action Plan and the Millennium Development Goals.

(UNICEF Office for Croatia)

In the period following the Declaration and the Plan of Action “World Fit for Children”, the UNICEF office for Croatia has directed its activities to the construction of a wide partnership for children, primarily with the Government of the Republic of Croatia. At the same time, partnership was established with public institutions, local government bodies, associations,

professionals, celebrities, media, business sector and citizens, parents and children. Thus, UNICEF could efficiently fulfill specific goals in several priority areas defined in the concluding document "A World Fit for Children", from which we state the following:

1. Protection of children from violence and creation of children friendly environment – implementation of the project for safe and motivating school surrounding (Program for protection of children from violence, neglect and abuse). The project began with the campaign entitled "Stop the violence among children", which pointed to the problem of peer abuse and invited schools, parents, business sector and all other interested parties to participate. A comprehensive implementation plan was drafted entitled "Seven steps to safe school", and for its implementation 70 domestic experts/trainers were trained. A total of 224 schools have started to implement the project so far, 115 of which successfully went through all the steps and were awarded the title "School Free of Violence". The project encompassed 123,000 students and 8,000 teachers, and brochures for students and teachers were published and distributed. Over 3,500,000.00 HRK was raised and spent for the project (21% by the Government and bodies of local government, 27% from companies, 44% from citizens and 8% from charity events).

2. Protection of children without adequate parental care – implementation of the project "Every Child Needs a Family" (Program for protection of children against violence, neglect and abuse). The project was initiated in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare with the goal of providing better care for children without adequate parental care, with the emphasis on professional support to foster families. For the purpose of this project an amount of 3 million HRK was raised (64% citizens' donations, 28% business sector, 8% charity events).

3. Support to parents and development of program for optimal early development – implementation of the program Early Childhood Development and the project "First three are the most important!", along with the project "Maternity wards – friends of children".

a) The basic goal of the project "First three are the most important!" (Program Early Childhood Development) is to provide help to parents in accomplishing encouraging parenting and providing the best possible care for infants. The goal is to be achieved through the sensibilization and education of health workers, direct education of parents through different media and organization of new services and offices for parents and youngest children at local level. Realization of the project began with the campaign presented in November of 2006.

b) Project Maternity Wards – friends of children – Together from the Beginning (Program Early Childhood Development). Project "Maternity Wards – friends of children" (Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative – BFHI) is a common global initiative of UNICEF and the World Health Organization. In 2007, UNICEF will be continuing initiated program activities according to internationally defined steps and criteria. All maternity wards in Croatia (34 and two regional wards) applied for participation. So far, expert and management structure of the project was defined, and educational materials are being drafted.

Item 6. Accomplishment of goals from the Plan of Action and Millennium Development Goals

(Promotion of healthy life-styles)

Millennium Development Goal 1

The risk of poverty line is defined in relative numbers so that in 2005 it amounted to 44,598.89 HRK per year for two adults with two children, while the same amount was 43,499.05 HRK in 2004. In 2005, the percent of people living in households, whose net equivalent income was below the poverty line was 17,5%, while in the previous year it was 16.7%. In the given period, the risk of poverty was higher for women (18.9% in 2005). The

highest rate is for older women (25.6%), and it is slightly higher among children for girls age 0-15 (21.3%) in relation to boys of the same age (18.2%). The poverty risk rate is higher for single mothers with one or more children (34.8%), while it is even higher for families with three or more children (31%). A significant role in combating poverty and attenuating its consequences assumes the system of social welfare, under which the poor, and other socially vulnerable groups, such as children, victims of violence and persons with a disabilities, obtain different kinds of assistance provided by the state. On December 31, 2005, 119,470 persons, i.e. 2,7% of population satisfied their basic living needs through the right to sustenance (42,554 were children under 18). Constitutional commitment to maintaining special state protection for children and family reflects itself in the fact that child of a single mother has the right to a higher amount for sustenance, i.e. the base is increased by 25%, in relation to the child of same age whose parents live together (on 31 December 2005, 5,556 parents were exercising this right.) A pregnant woman after 12 weeks of pregnancy and the child-bearing woman has the right to a 50% increase of the base compensation (in 2005, 405 users were exercising this right). With the goal to provide further education of school children living in socially threatened families, in 2004, an amendment was added, allowing support for the dorm expenses (on 31 December 2005, 389 children).

(Promotion of quality education)

Millennium Development Goal 2,3

In the period 2004-2006 many improvements were made in the field of education, beginning with the preschool, to primary and secondary education. Furthermore, in accordance with the Decade Action Plan for the Integration of Roma People 2005-2015, intensive activities were conducted in the effort to include Roma children in preschool programs and programs up to two years before school with the aim of easier adaptation to the regular school system. Within the preschool system, in 2005, several kindergartens were promoted as excellence centers for professional improvement of tutors and professional collaborators working with preschool children according to the Maria Montessori method, for the first time in Croatia. From 2005/2006 school year till today, 268 programs of early foreign language learning for preschool children were approved, and over 40% of children, ages 4-6, are learning one foreign language as part of the preschool program. In addition, in the last two years, in kindergartens and sport associations, 205 new shorter sporting programs including rhythmic, dancing, folk dance, soccer, taekwondo, tennis, etc. were verified in cooperation with the Croatian Olympic Board, and as part of the project Olympic Kindergarten Festival, whereas sport competitions are regularly taking place in kindergartens. 2006. In 2006, a program for preschool children with health problems was initiated as a model of care for preschool children with health problems.

The system of primary education was defined by the Croatian National Educational Standard (CNES), and in September 2006 all primary schools started implementing the New Curriculum and Program constructed according to the CNES guidelines. During 2005/2006 school year, professional training of teachers, principals and expert collaborators was conducted in experimental schools. Beginning with the 2005/2006 school year, primary school pupils have started to learn one foreign language in the first grade, while over 60% of children, from fourth to eighth grade, are learning two foreign languages. For this project, beginning with the 2003/2004 school year, over 1,000 new teaching positions were opened, and another 170 foreign language teachers will be employed in 2007. For children that are, due to their medical condition, unable to come to school classes, but who are willing and able to master the school curriculum, and for other children with developmental problems, the program envisages learning at home conducted by teachers of the schools these children are enrolled in. In the 2005/2006 school year, learning at home was organized for 65 primary schools pupils and three high-school children. In accordance with the Primary School Education Act and Secondary School Education Act, for children that are, due to medical or other reasons, placed in medical or social welfare institutions, education is conducted by institutions where the child is placed or by the nearest primary school. Pursuant to the above, for a number of years now, teaching has been conducted on hospital wards.

Numerous positive changes were also implemented in the system of secondary education. In accordance with the Croatian strategy of development of a society based on knowledge, the Government decided to gradually implement special measures in secondary education. The Government secured financial resources for a series of stimulative measures, such as free schoolbooks, free transportation and accommodation in student homes, and providing material and administrative conditions necessary for implementation, offered a model, means and mechanisms to make secondary education accessible to everyone.

Millennium Development Goal 4

In 2002, infant mortality rate on 1,000 live-born children was 7.0 ‰, while in 2004, it was 6.1 ‰. Causes of death in Croatia do not differ from causes of death in other developed countries, including: Pathological states referring to pregnancy and birth (55.5%), congenital anomalies (30.6%), injuries, poisoning and other consequences of external causes such as sudden infant death syndrome (3.3%), and other (10.6%). In 2005, 46.3% of children died due to specific pathological causes linked to pregnancy and birth, and 35.5% died due to congenital anomalies. Specific infant death rates are 6.1/1,000, for children ages 1 to 4 25.80/100,000, for children ages 5 to 9 12.45/100,000, for children ages 10 to 14 14.35/100,000, for children ages 15 to 19 45.91/100,000.

Activities

- Ante-natal care:

a) Average number of examinations during pregnancy in 2004 included 6 clinical examinations, while the new Plan and Program of Health Care Measures 2006 increased the standard to 9 clinical examinations and 6 ultrasounds, and one house call nurse visit to the pregnant woman after 12 weeks of pregnancy. Educational courses for parents about birth and infant care are held in medical facilities (17).

- Post-natal care:

a) In accordance with the Law on Obligatory Health Insurance (Official Gazette, No. 85/06) and the Health Insurance Act (Official Gazette, No. 121/03) children under 18 share their parents' health insurance and exercise the right to free health care. Primary health care for children is conducted by pediatricians and doctors of general/family practice, while specific preventive health care is conducted by school doctors. In 2004, 72.4% of infants and preschool children were in the care of pediatricians, and 27.6% in the care of general/family MDs. In 2005, 72.7% of infants and preschool children were in the care of pediatricians, and 27.3% in the care of general/family MDs. As part of infant and preschool health care, systematic check-ups of children are conducted and parent counseling provided. In 2002, out of the total of 1,284,247 house calls, 128,857 were house calls to infants, whereas in 2005, from the total of 1,354,692 house calls, 155,787 were house calls to infants.

Vaccination of preschool and school children is conducted in accordance with the program of obligatory vaccination against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, children paralysis, mumps, measles, tuberculosis and viral hepatitis B. In 2002, another vaccination was added to the calendar, a vaccination against H. influenzae type B. In the same year, first doses for IPV and DTaP were introduced in the vaccination series against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. Immunization rate of 95% among children was achieved and surpassed in most envisaged vaccinations, while in the case of measles (morbili) the vaccination rate is 94.5%.

b) The number of new specializations in pediatrics for primary health care in 2002 was 9, in 2003 it rose to 22, in 2005 it was 25 (including 11 sub specializations in neonatology), and in 2006, the number was 38 (including 4 sub specializations in neonatology).

c) The support was provided for the publishing of informative brochures on safety car seats in order to increase the security of children during driving and participation in traffic.

d) In 2006, a program for implementation of "Health cards from birth to majority" was initiated with the aim to systematically track the development and growth of children, and the exceptions in children's growth and development. Health card includes the immunization card with all the immunizations conducted in accordance with the Immunization calendar.

Millennium Development Goal 5

Maternal death rates in Croatia are low. In 2002, due to consequences of pregnancy, birth or purperium 4 women died, in 2004, 3 women died, and in 2005, 3 women died. In 2004, 10,288 terminations of pregnancies were reported, which is 6.5% less than in 2003, while in 2005, 10,255 pregnancies were terminated, representing a further downfall. The percentage of young girls under 19 in the total number of women who willingly conducted the termination of pregnancy was 8.3% in 2003, 7.7% in 2004, and 7.8% in 2005. The total number of preventive check-ups shows an increasing trend (in 2002 – 308,357, in 2004 – 407,684).

Activities

a) Croatia has low maternal death rate. Health care includes a series of measures referring to counseling, prevention of teenage pregnancies and artificially induced miscarriages, prevention of most frequent causes of death of women in fertile age, and other.

b) In 2006, started the implementation of the National program for Early Breast Cancer Detection – mammographic screening. The two-year national program encompassed women ages 50 to 69, and the detection method was mammography.

Millennium Development Goal 6

So far, Croatia has managed to evade a larger epidemic of HIV/AIDS. First cases of infection were recorded in 1985, and by the end of 2006, a total of 608 HIV-infected persons were registered. Presently, there are around 12 new cases of HIV infection per year, per million inhabitants. A total of 9 children were born by HIV-infected mothers. The National program for Prevention of HIV/AIDS was drafted in 1993, and in 2005, the National program for the Prevention of HIV/AIDS 2005-2010 was drafted and its measures implemented (promotion of protective behavior in general population and adolescent population, prevention of objectively defined risky behaviors in particular groups of increased risk, etc.).

Millennium Development Goal 7

According to the study of the quality of environment presented at the World Economic Forum held in New York in 2002, Croatia rose to the 12th place among 142 world countries by the quality of its environment. In 2005, from the total number of water specimens taken to determine the purity of drinking water from public water supply system, only 5.9% was microbiologically and 5.5% was chemically impure and unfit for drinking. Coverage of drinking water supply from public water supply system at the state level in 2005 was 78%. In 2005, from the total number of microbiologically tested food specimens 6.37% were impure, while from the total number of chemically tested food specimens, 4.15% were impure. From the total number of microbiologically tested items of general usage, 5.62% were improper, while 5.65% were chemically improper.

(Mobilization of resources)

Millennium Development Goal 8

In accordance with the Act on Organization of the Games of Chance and Prize Games (2002), the Government allocates 50% of all income from games of chance to civil society organizations working on the development and promotion of sport, out-of-institutional education of children and youth, improvement of life of disabled persons, prevention of drug abuse and other forms of addiction, culture, technical culture, social welfare and humanitarian activities, and the development of civil society. In 2003, National Foundation for the Development of Civil Society was established, with the basic purpose of promoting and developing civil society.

Furthermore, in past years UNICEF raised and spent significant resources on programs for children. From citizens and business sector, over 8 million Kuna was raised for direct program interventions in Croatia, while a share of profit made through the sale of cards was directed to the so-called regular resources of the UNICEF, with which UNICEF secures its presence and capacity to react in crisis situations on global level. From 2003, the total amount of donations in services surpassed 10 million Kuna, including communication counseling, development of creative solutions and concession of media time and space. In

2007, 74 companies, business associations, academic societies and NGOs joined the world initiative Global Compact, marking the beginning of the Croatian Global Compact network.

(Child protection against abuse, exploitation and violence; other obligations referring to children's rights)

- General protection

The amendments to the Family and Criminal Justice Legislation enhanced the cooperation between the social care system, police and the judiciary, but the education of the public resulted as well in an increase of early detection of cases of child abuse and/or neglect and the cooperation with civil society plays also a very important role. When children's rights and interests in the family are significantly endangered, courts rule on separating children and on their accommodation in social care homes, respectively, foster families. At the beginning of 2006, 1456 children were placed in homes for children without appropriate family care (14 homes were established by the Republic of Croatia and 4 are privately owned), while 86 children were accommodated in dislocated units where they were prepared for independent life. A network of homes and social care activities was established for providing care services to children not living with their own families and without appropriate parental care. The nomenclature and classification were also built for services provided to homes for children without appropriate parental care. The Republic of Croatia has committed itself to deinstitutionalize – reduce the number of children living in homes for children without appropriate parental care in favour of the growth of the number of children living in foster families and the desired ratio is 20 to 80%. One of the most important objectives is placing children younger than 3 years in foster families. There is a growing trend of placing in foster families. The number of accommodated people has increased from 2.500 10 years ago to 5.872 people placed in 2.649 foster families (whereof 2.224 children are in 1.310 families). Without discrimination, children without appropriate parental care, disabled children, as well as HIV positive children and addicts are fostered. In 2005, to prevent and timely react to cases of child abuse in social care institutions, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare established a Department for Inspection Affairs supervising the implementation of law and professional work. To prevent and suppress violence amongst and over children, funds were provided for additional recruitment (from 2004 to 2006, 130 experts - who take care of children without appropriate parental care, children and young people with behavioural disorders and also of children and young people with physical and mental disabilities - were employed in homes). The Office of the Public Attorney for Children talks to personnel and children in the abovementioned institutions and obtains an insight into the children's living conditions and the quality of professional work. The children are acquainted with the possibility to contact directly the Office of the Public Attorney for Children.

In 2003, the Act on Protection against Family Violence was adopted which defines the following: the concept of family violence as an offence, the circle of people considered as family members, ways to protect family members and types and purpose of offence sanctions. The Government adopted both the National Strategy of Protection against Family Violence for the period from 2005 to 2007 and the Rules of Procedure in Cases of Family Violence which define both the obligations and ways of procedures of all competent bodies and other factors participating in the detection and suppression of violence and which provide assistance and protect those exposed to family violence. In addition, 2004 the Activity Program for Prevention of Violence amongst Children and Young People was adopted to prevent appearances of violence amongst children and young people, to educate experts working with children, to make parents, children and young people sensible to the issue of violence, to provide systematic assistance to children and young people victims of violence and to scientifically observe appearances of violence amongst children and young people. The Rule on Procedure in Cases of Violence amongst Children and Young People which defines procedures of all bodies in cases of violence amongst children was adopted. Pursuant to the Act on Amendments on the Criminal Code (Official Gazett, nr 71/06), offence sanctions have become stricter for criminal activities to the detriment of children and it was stipulated that the statue of limitation of criminal prosecution to the detriment of children does not run until minors reach their maturity. The timely detection and report of crime to the

detriment of children and minors is of vital importance, especially of certain kinds of criminal activities which significantly render difficult the normal development of young people, and as such they can stimulate various forms of behavioural disorders of children and minors, ranging from their unacceptable to delinquent behaviour. Within the field of criminal justice the protection of children and minors, and above all, owing to a further improvement of the competence and effectiveness of crime officers and the efficiency in suppressing minor delinquency, it was observed that the positive trend continued since, in 2006, 5843 such criminal activities were detected and reported, which is an increase of 10.33% in comparison to 2005 when 5296 such criminal activities were detected and reported.

- Protection from Armed Conflicts

The Republic of Croatia has drafted and submitted the First Report to the Facultative Protocol to the Convention on Children's Rights regarding the involvement of children in armed conflicts. The applicability of the Protocol is based on Croatia's commitment to human rights, democracy and to the principles of the rule of law which are the goals of Croatia's foreign and domestic policy. The Croatian legislation guarantees children the rights in various areas of life having contents based on modern international standards in the field of human rights and international humanitarian law. The Government includes into its priorities the protection of children's rights as well as the issue of children-soldiers and is supported by the civilian society bearing in mind the recent history of children suffering during the Homeland War. With that report, Croatia has committed itself focusedly to the basic principles of the Convention: non-discrimination (Article 2), child's best interest (Article 3); right to live, survival and development (Article 6) and respect for the view and opinion of the child (Article 12). Minors are protected by the national legislation which prohibits drafts of minors (persons under 18). The issue of conscript service is regulated in a way that a person younger than 18 cannot enter the composition of the Armed Forces and cannot perform conscript service. We also underpin that the Croatian legislation does not recognize the institution of "voluntary drafts". Furthermore, the National Activity Program laid down numerous measures and activities to secure the appropriate manner of meeting the needs of children affected by war and war consequences and secures as well adequate conditions for their proper growth and development.

- Suppression of Child Labour

A special role for the supervision and suppression of various forms of illegal child labour has the State Inspector's Office as a body of the State Administration which is primarily competent for inspection affairs. The Labour Act contains legal provisions on the youngest age for employment, legal capacities of minors for entering into an employment contract, prohibition of employment for minors in certain jobs, prohibition of overtime work, night work, and work in conditions of redistribution of full working hours, the shortest duration of holidays for minors. The inspector is competent to prohibit the employment of a minor in certain jobs, to prohibit the employer to determine overtime and night work for the minor as well as misdemeanor provisions prescribed for procedures against the aforementioned provisions.

- Abolishing Child Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

Croatia is actively engaged in international activities in the field of suppression of human trafficking. Upon signing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and the relating protocols, the National Committee for the Suppression of Human Trafficking was adopted. The Government adopted the National Plan for the Suppression of Child Trafficking from October 2005 until the end of December 2007. During the determination of activities of the aforementioned document, the basic principles of the Convention of Children's Rights were taken into account and its basic guidelines are in the child's best interest. The Croatian criminal legislation recognises child trafficking as a qualified form of criminal act of trafficking in human beings and sanctions it adequately. The definition of the criminal act of trafficking in human beings was taken from the Palermo Protocol. In 2004, 19 victims of human trafficking were identified (3 victims were minors), in 2005 6 victims (2 were minors) and in 2006 12 victims (2 were minors). The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare ensured the operation of the shelter for children victims of human trafficking. In the shelter, the children are provided with all required assistance: translation to a language the child understands legal, medical

psychological and social help and there is also a possibility of education. Each child is provided with an individual approach, so that experts from various fields elaborate programs for help and protection adjusted to the needs of each single child as a victim of human trafficking. The county coordinators for carrying out and coordinating activities in each individual case of child trafficking are appointed for the area of each county. In addition to human trafficking, the Criminal Code prescribes a large number of criminal acts referring to child prostitution and pornography as well as to the abuse of children and minor persons.

Item 7. Short summary of gained experience and initiatives undertaken since 2002 to enhance progress

Since the end of 2004, all central primary schools, 700 area catchment schools and all secondary schools have been connected to the network by ISDN. Since 2005, the access to the network has been modernised, so that 169 schools have been connected through 100Mbps optics to the CARNet network, 880 by ADSL and 350 by ISDN. For some islands and rural areas (the so-called distant locations) lacking the appropriate infrastructure for a quality connection of schools, the connection to the CARNet network via satellite is currently being tested. All Croatian primary and secondary schools are equipped with a computer class room and access to the Network. All school have a network room (1.400 schools) and each pupil (600.000 pupils) has an e-mail address. By the end of 2006, 4.500 teachers and employees in primary and secondary education obtained the European Computer Driving License (ECDL) certificate, while more than 10.000 primary school teachers and teachers of various vocations went through other forms of professional training. All scientific institutes, higher education institutions and student homes are connected to the CARNet network. The access speed is 1,2 gigabits and its users are the only one in Europe with free access. The Agency for Education carried out the first international quality assessment for education within OECD's (Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation) PISA project (Programme for International Student Assessment) by testing pupils at the age of 15. In 2005, the experimental testing was carried out in 40 schools on a pattern of 1.600 pupils. The first real testing was conducted in 2006 (5.250 pupils in 159 secondary and nine primary schools). The results will be made public in 2007 and will give an insight into the quality of education on an internationally comparable basis.

From 2005 to 2006, the Agency for Vocational Education carried out the CARDS 2002 Program »Vocational Education and Training: Modernisation and Building of Institutions« within its framework the analysis of the labour market was carried out and as a result the number of vocational educational sectors was reduced from 32 to 14 and the White Paper was drafted for defining the starting points for the modernisation of the vocational education and training system. In addition to forming 14 new vocational educational sectors, in 2006, the Agency established for 13 of them Sector Councils and appointed council members. The sectorial council suggested the reduction of vocations from 1400 to 323. The Government supported the organisation 'Croatiaskills' (an organisation for promoting young people's knowledges and skills) and based on that, amongst only 47 countries around the world, received full membership in the world organisation 'WorldSkills International'.

The 2007 budget of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports provides 80 Million Kunas for the school building project. The plan is that by 2010 most of the school have just one shift. Also, 50% more funds are secured for equipping primary and secondary schools with classroom, didactic and IT equipment. Also, due to spacious inadequacy and insufficient school equipment, pupils with permanent physical damages often cannot exercise their right and obligation to primary education in the vicinity of their place of residence and thus, growing up in their families.

The Ministry has initiated, in cooperation with the Croatian Union of Physically Disabled Persons Associations, the Project Network of Schools without architectural barriers in order to record the situation and requirements for adjusting school rooms to pupils with larger motor damages. Thus, for the first time, based on actual facts and requirements, the

conditions were created for bringing a plan for school networks according to accessibility criteria (ramp, sanitary facilities, lift, conveyor belt). The final objective of the project is the architectural adjustment of schools, so that children with larger motor damages are enabled to receive education in their local community. Currently, there are 27 entirely spaciouly adjusted schools attended by 21 pupils with motor disability. In 2006, the Ministry invested 915,000 Kunas in the spacious adaptation of eight primary and nine secondary schools. The elaboration of a model for an integral solution to that problem is in progress and the Ministry sees a mutual financial investment of the local community and regional/local administration bodies in order to make a network of adjusted schools in each county. In 2007, one million Kuna was provided for further investments in the architectural adjustment of schools, and the school building project was funded by loans from the World Bank, EIB II, CEB V and through the Public Private Partnership all standards enabling architectural adjustments of schools to children with motor damages will be respected. It is certain, that in this way the chances will be minimized for pupils with motor damages to feel discriminated in educational facilities due to the ease of movement. Furthermore, funds in the amount of 240 Million Kunas are provided for free school books for primary school pupils and for the first secondary school class, as well as the funds in the amount of 15.2 Million Kunas for co-financing inter-local transportation of secondary school pupils.

In the past, important steps were made for the achievement of development objectives planned until 2010 for the field of preschool education which are an increase of the number of enrolled children into preschool programs from the present 43% to 60% as well as the coverage of children with preschool (a year before going to primary school) from the current 96% to 98%. The draft of the National Pedagogy Standards in Primary Education is in its final phase and will define standards kindergartens and other legal subjects have to achieve when carrying out preschool education programs.

The Croatian National Education Standard (HNOS), as a reform project of the Ministry, and initiated by teachers, supported by parents and the broader scientific and professional community, has responded to the requirements of changing work in primary school, primarily regarding teaching methods and teaching contents. The disencumberment of pupils was achieved, methodical approaches in the teaching process were modernised, the Curriculum was modernised; individual work with children was intensified, a greater creativity of teachers was achieved; intensive professional education and training of educational activity bearers were achieved; the connection of schools ranging from large urban centres to the smallest places was achieved; the co-operation between schools and local community was encouraged, especially regarding innovative school projects; parents were assigned a partner role; wider communication between the educational policy bearers, scientific praxis and users was established in order to further enhance the system.

Gymnasium pupils and pupils attending four-year secondary school programs complete their secondary education by taking the school-leaving qualifications carried out by the National Centre for External Education Evaluation. Starting in the school year 2008/2009, gymnasium pupils will have to take the school-leaving qualification and a year later pupils of other four-year programs. By introducing the national school-leaving qualifications, the quality of education will be safeguarded and the objective is that they replace admission tests at many higher educational institutions. In May 2006, the first national examinations were carried out as a preparation for the introduction of the national school-leaving qualifications starting in the school year 2008/2009. Thus, for the first time, an external education evaluation has been established as an objective quality indicator for secondary school education. The national education will secure the standardisation of pupils' educational achievements. In 2006, the Council for Pedagogy Standards was appointed and tasked with drafting a universal Pedagogy Standard applicable to all kindergartens and schools and the Curriculum Council for drafting the framework of a national education curriculum. Lengthening mandatory education is motivated to the same extent by both the enhancement of the individual's right to live and his quality of living and by securing the overall development of society. We expect those measures to significantly reduce the number of pupils with incompleted secondary education and to make possible further education to a

larger number of pupils, which is important for the increase of the present percentage of population with university degree (7,82%), for the development of the overall society and competitiveness of the Republic of Croatia in the more and more demanding global labour market.

Relating to the area of social care, as previously mentioned (under point 3.), the realisation of the Project of the Development of the Social Care System was approached with the intention to establish a new, more rational and effective system orientated towards the socially most threatened citizens, respectively, socially vulnerable groups. This implies further decentralisation and transfer of authority to units of local/regional autonomy, so that these services become more efficient and reachable to citizens; more systematic incentives and financial support to activities of nongovernmental organisations and humanitarian organisation; a better orientation of financial compensations, where particularities of certain areas regarding tradition and the way of life will be respected; a better provision of social services in institutions and outside institutions; obtaining quality information on social rights; as well as the informatisation of the system. The project is carried out by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in cooperation with all relevant institutions (units of local (regional) and local autonomy, social care institutions, scientific and professional institutions, civilian society organisation, social partners, media etc.) and consists of three components. The first component refers to the enhancement of the provision of social services by means of developing a series of social programs. The second includes strengthening the IT and management system, which will support the new model based on the "one stop shop" principle and the third component should result in the improvement of infrastructure in social care facilities (building 13 new social care centres and adaptation of 13 existing centres, and improving sanitary hygiene conditions in 57 social care homes), which will certainly contribute to raising the quality of the provision of services. It is expected, that carrying out the project will have a direct and indirect influence on the improvement of the situation of children from socially vulnerable groups.

In order to ensure the quality of life for children with development problems and disabled people put into social care homes, measures are taken for adopting modern rehabilitation programs and procedures in accordance to requirements, interests and capabilities of the users in order to ensure that their needs will be met and that their rights are respected. We expect that the application of the abovementioned programs will reflect the quality of work and especially the effects of the rehabilitation. At the same time, it is worked on individual work with the child, good organisation of leisure time, motivation of children and parents for an active participation in realising the rehabilitation, regular education of employees in order to get acquainted with new methods of professional work, the development of counselling work with parents, making stronger connection with the local community in the sense to exchange contents of life between the institution and community and to intensify activities in order to return the child into his/her family environment.

Throughout 2006, the Ministry of Family, Veteran's Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity initiated in the counties the establishment of family centres to promote family values and to help the family with modern challenges (support to families, children and disabled persons). Within the framework of their activities, the family centres will carry out counselling matters and preventive work which are referring to the following: marriage, situations within the family requiring professional support and assistance, raising children, adoption and preventing all forms of addiction of children and young persons, problems with disability; involvement into the everyday life after a long stay in an educational facility, raising the quality of life of children, young persons and family, promoting and developing programs for working in the community, voluntary work and work of citizen organisations and others. The amendments to the Family Act are in progress, especially the part referring to the improvement of regulations on child alimony, so that the child has a secured adequate living standard and the right to a dignified life. At the same time, a sort of alimony fund is being established through which the state will safeguard required funds, in case the parental support is absent, and thus, improve the child's material security.

In the field of health protection of mothers and children and pursuant to the objectives of the National Plan of Activities, it is planned to improve the health condition of pregnant women, babies and children, to secure the quality of health services for all children, to ensure an application of modern principles of humanization of ambulance treatment and to protect the reproduction and sexual health of children. After the adoption of the National Program for the Promotion of Breast Feeding, the basic prerequisites for the promotion and support of breast feeding will be created with the aim to secure the diet by breastfeeding up to at least the baby's sixth month. The draft for the Action Plan for the Prevention of Overweight and Obesity is in progress and will include children in order to prevent diseases and mortality caused by obesity-related illnesses. The National Program for the Prevention of Children Injuries, National Strategy for the Prevention of Behavioural Disorders of Children and Young People are being prepared and the elaborations of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect as well as the National Plan against Sexual Exploitation of Children are being planned.