

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATION

CROATIA

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION – VICTIM ASSISTANCE

COMMITTEE ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE

(Burkina Faso, the Netherlands, Slovenia (Chair) and Zambia)

Intersessional Meetings

18-20 June 2024

1. The Committee welcomes the submission by Croatia of updated information on its victim assistance activities.
2. Based on the information provided in Croatia's Article 7 report as well as additional information provided in 2023 in response to Committee's observations, the Committee presents the following preliminary observations.

Mine casualties

3. Croatia reported 3 casualties in 2023 including 2 deminers and one hunter all of whom were killed, showing an increase to 1 casualty reported for 2022, and decrease to 7 casualties reported for the year before. Croatia reported a total of 610 casualties registered between 1996 and the end of 2023. Croatia reported that of the 610 casualties 207 people were killed.
4. Croatia provided further information indicating that as a result of a survey in 2020, 423 direct and 473 indirect explosive ordnances (EO) were identified and 38% of the direct victims were deceased. The report disaggregates information by gender and age of the survivors.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE ACTIONS:

Strengthen partnerships and integrate victim assistance into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks and designation of a government entity to oversee the integration (Actions #1, #6 and #33)

5. Croatia reported that the National Educational Centre Sector at the Civil Protection Directorate at the Ministry of Interior is the contact point for victim assistance, and that this role will be shifted to the Coordination Body which is in the process of being established. The Coordination Body will include representatives of ministries competent for home affairs, health and war veterans, Croatian Pension Insurance Institute, Croatian Institute of Public Health and other bodies such as non-government organisations.
6. Croatia reported that the Ministry of Veterans of War oversees the implementation of the Law on Civilian Victims of Homeland War, which provides the same legal security to civilian victims as is already provided to the Croatian War Veterans, and among others, to EO survivors and affected families.
7. Croatia also reported that victim assistance has been integrated into relevant national laws, policies and programmes, with relevant State administration authorities being involved in addressing challenges in victim assistance, including medical rehabilitation, socio-economic empowerment, and other areas.

Develop and implement measurable, realistic and time-bound national action plan (Actions #2 and #33)

8. Croatia reported on the existence of a National Plan for the period of 2021-2027 for equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. Croatia reported that the plan established the framework for integration of mine victims including the following goals:

- *Ensure inclusive upbringing and education for children with developmental disabilities and students with disabilities*
- *Improvement of employment system for persons with disabilities*
- *Improved access to services in the health care system for persons with disabilities*
- *Deinstitutionalization and prevention of institutionalization of persons with disabilities*
- *Improving accessibility*
- *Strengthening security for persons with disabilities in crisis situations*

Removing barriers including physical, social, cultural, political, attitudinal and communication barriers to access such services (Action #33)

9. Croatia reported that the Nation Plan on equal opportunities for persons with disabilities aims to lift obstacles encountered by persons with disabilities, with the following institutions participating in its implementation and monitoring: Ministry of Labor, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, Ministry of Science and Education, Institute for Expertise, Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, Croatian Employment Institute, centres for professional rehabilitation, Ministry of Health, Croatian Institute for Health Insurance, Croatian Institute for Public Health, Education Agency, Agency for Vocational Education and Adult Education, associations of persons with disabilities and associations that work in favour of persons with disabilities, Ministry of Croatian Veterans of War, Central State Office for the Development of Digital Society, Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and State Property and other relevant State and civil society stakeholders.

Applying multi-sectoral efforts to ensure that the needs and rights of mine victims are effectively addressed in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Action #34)

10. Croatia reported on progress and activities related to the application of a multi-sectoral approach, including by engaging various ministries and agencies in implementation of the National Plan on disabilities which includes mine survivors and through efforts carried out by the Steering Committee for Demining and Socio-Economic Integration, whose membership includes the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Croatian Veterans' Affairs, Croatian Red Cross, Association of Patriotic War Volunteers and Veterans and Croatian Employment Service.

11. The Committee would welcome further information on alignment of victim assistance efforts with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Establish or strengthen a centralised database / national information management system (Actions #9 and #35)

12. Croatia reported that the Croatian Institute of Public Health maintains the registry of persons with disabilities, and relevant institution can have access to the necessary data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

13. The Committee would welcome information on the integration of data on survivors into the registry of persons with disabilities, maintained by the Institute of Public Health.

Access to first aid and ongoing emergency medical care (Action #36)

14. Croatia reported on the availability of public health care structures that includes clinics, clinical centres, specialised polyclinics, hospitals and rehabilitation centres, and everyone involved in the incidents are entitled to health protection and rehabilitation.

Developing national referral mechanism (Action #37)

15. Croatia reported on availability of a national referral mechanisms and a directory of services, in the form of a brochure, facilitating access to services.

Access to rehabilitation services including physiotherapy, assistive devices and occupational therapy (Action #38)

16. Croatia reported on the availability of rehabilitation services including national insurance assisting EO victims in accessing assistive devices. Croatia reported that EO victims are entitled to health protection and acquisition of assistive technology “to the amount covered by the Croatian Health Insurance Institute”, in accordance with relevant national laws, rules and regulations in place.

17. Croatia reported that rehabilitation is included in the healthcare system and rehabilitation services are provided for free of charge.

Access to psychological and psychosocial services including peer-to-peer support (Action #38)

18. Croatia reported that psychosocial support workshops were held and benefited victims in 2022 and 2023, in addition to benefiting 39 victims (in 2022), continued providing support in terms of counselling, employment through 4 workshops and 12 targeted trainings to 36 EO victims.

19. The Committee recalls that in previous years, Croatia reported on the availability of psychosocial interdisciplinary centres in all twenty-one counties of the country, including four regional centres for psychological and psychotherapeutic services.

20. The Committee would welcome additional information on availability of peer-to-peer support, and its inclusion into health systems.

Access to social and economic inclusion services, including in rural and remote areas (Action #39)

21. Croatia reported that one of the roles integrated into the national referral system, is the enforcement of the National Employment Incentive Plan, which requires each employer with more than 20 employees to recruit persons with disabilities. Croatia reported that when hiring, State administration bodies, as well as legal entities in full or partial ownership of the State, are obliged to give priority to persons with disabilities under the same conditions. In addition, an employer who employs a person with a disability and a person with a disability who is self-employed is subsidised by the following incentives:

- *Salary subsidy for a person with a disability*
- *Co-financing the costs of education of a person with a disability*

- *Co-financing the costs of adjusting the workplace for a person with a disability*
- *Co-financing the costs of adjusting working conditions for a person with a disability*
- *A subsidy in the amount of the paid contribution for compulsory health insurance*
- *Financing the costs of professional support*
- *Special funds for the development of new technologies and business processes in order to employ and maintain the employment of persons with disabilities with employers in the open labour market, i.e. with persons with disabilities who are self-employed*
- *Support for the sustainability of self-employment of people with disabilities*
- *Co-financing the costs of transporting people with disabilities.*

22. Croatia reported that in 2023, 15 mine victims and members of their immediate families (indirect victims) were provided with financial assistance to create or expand existing entrepreneurship.

Taking measure for safety and protection of mine survivors in situations of risks and emergencies (Action #40)

23. Croatia reported that persons with disabilities are recognised as a vulnerable group when it comes to emergency situations and activities carried out by the Safe and Equal in Emergency project (known as SEE ME) ensures the specific needs of persons with disabilities are considered both in awareness materials and the essential skills responders require when it comes to persons with different types of disabilities.

Strengthening inclusion and participation of mine victims and their representative organisations in all matters that affect them (Actions #4 and #41)

24. Croatia reported on existence of an advisory Commission assisting the government on ensuring the wellbeing of persons with disabilities. Croatia reported that the Commission is composed of all ministries, the Central State Office for Sports, the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, the Central State Office for the Development of Digital Society, representatives of relevant scientific institutions and representatives of 18 federations and associations of persons with disabilities.

25. The Committee would welcome further information on inclusion of representatives of mine survivors in the advisory Commission.

CROSS-CUTTING ACTIONS:

Demonstrate high levels of national ownership, including [...] by making financial and other commitments to implementation (Action #1)

26. Croatia reported that all relevant public institutions that carry out activities in relation to mine victims, or include them in their programmes, finance such activities through their regular budget and that all EU funded projects are inclusive of the needs of EO victims.

Ensure that the different needs and perspectives of women, girls, boys and men are considered (Action #3)

27. The Committee recalls that Croatia reported that the field survey that was carried out in cooperation with Switzerland, considered the different needs and perspectives of women, girls, boys and men as well as their age.

The Committee would welcome further information on how Croatia considered gender in implementation of its victim assistance responsibilities.

Challenges in implementation of Victim assistance Commitments (Action #8)

28. Croatia reported that one of major challenge in victim assistance is the lack of motivation and interest among EO victims in participating in available activities and support programmes. Despite significant efforts invested, there are still challenges. Croatia also reported having identified different approaches to address the challenges and to improve the quality of life mine victims and their families, including through:

- Coordinated services that respond to the needs of mine victims/local communities with significant number of mine victims and their family members;
- Additional employment programmes and educational workshops increasing competences and career guidance of mine victims and their family members;
- Possibility of providing the additional financial assistance packages for an independent business ventures or incentives and cooperatives for agricultural activities targeting mine victims and their family members;
- possibility to develop an on-line group programme serving as an additional type of outreach support; and
- Further clearance activities in mine affected areas, with infrastructure development that would follow and increase quality of life of affected communities, especially in distant rural areas.

The Oslo Action Plan country reporting tracker
Victim Assistance
Croatia

Actions	Indicators	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Additional information request by the Committee
#33	# States Parties that have designated a government entity to coordinate victim assistance activities						
	# States Parties that have national action plans in place containing specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound objectives and related indicators						
#34	# States Parties that report that they include mine victims in relevant national policy and support frameworks						The Committee would welcome further information on alignment of victim assistance efforts with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).
#35	# States Parties that include victims of anti-personnel mines in disability data systems						The Committee would welcome information on integration of survivors data into the registry of persons with disabilities, maintained by the Institute of Public Health.
	# States Parties that disaggregate victim data by gender, age and disability						
#36	# States Parties reporting on efforts to ensure an efficient and effective emergency response to mine accidents						
#37	# States Parties that report having a national referral mechanism						
	# States Parties that report having a directory of services in place						
#38	# States Parties reporting on efforts to increase the availability and accessibility of comprehensive rehabilitation services						
	# States Parties reporting on efforts to increase the availability of psychological and psychosocial support services						
	# States Parties that have established peer-to-peer services within their national healthcare system						The Committee would welcome information on availability of peer-to-peer support, and its inclusion into health systems.
#39	# States Parties reporting on efforts to remove barriers to the social and economic inclusion of mine victims						
#40	# States Parties that report integrating protection of mine survivors in their humanitarian response and preparedness plans						

#41	# States Parties that report that they include victim representatives or their organizations in victim assistance planning at the national and local level								The Committee would welcome further information on inclusion of representatives of mine survivors in the advisory Commission.
CROSS-CUTTING ACTIONS									
#1	# States Parties that report, having included Convention implementation activities in national development plans, poverty reduction strategies, humanitarian response plans and national strategies for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, where appropriate								
	% mine-affected States Parties that report making national financial commitments to the implementation of their obligations under the Convention								
#3	# mine-affected States Parties that report having evidence-based, costed and time-bound national strategies and work plans in place								<u>The Committee would welcome further information on how Croatia considered gender in implementation of its victim assistance responsibilities.</u>
	# women in States Parties' delegations attending Convention meetings								
#8	# States Parties that prepare their Article 7 reports using the Guide to Reporting								
	# States Parties that report on progress and challenges during formal and informal meetings								