

Contribution by Croatia

Millennium Development Goals in Croatia Overview

United Nations High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

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Croatia is on path to implement all Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In looking for a comprehensive approach, Croatia has taken a number of measures on the national level to ensure that the MDG implementation is coordinated both with national priorities and with European Union (EU) accession requirements.

Croatia's objectives are set out in two important documents: the **Joint Assessment of Employment Policy Priorities (JAP)** and the **Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM)**.

JIM represents the first step in the application of EU common goals in the fight against poverty and social exclusion through national policy. An action plan for JIM's implementation is developed for period 2007-2009. **JAP** tackles the employment policy and the reorganisation of institutions in accordance with the European Employment Strategy and the implementing mechanisms of the European Social Fund. JAP should be finalised by the end of 2007.

The government is paying particular attention to ways to best attack poverty which involves the targeting of chronically impoverished groups. Most of these are UNDP's initiatives to promote social inclusion. They include people with disabilities, elderly over 65 (especially women), long-term unemployed, members of the Roma ethnic group, and families with three or more children.

Croatia's first MDG Report, made public in 2004, and the 2006 Country Progress Report, defined these and other target indicators for 2015, including steps to improve public water-supply systems.

In 2004, the government adopted the National Employment Action Plan 2005-2008, with measures aimed at decreasing the percentage of the long-term unemployed. Other anti-poverty steps include the Strategy and the Action Plan for Adult Education, the National Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence for 2005 – 2007, the 2003 National Programme for Roma, the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. In 2005, Government adopted National Strategy and National Action Plan for Prevention of HIV/AIDS (2005-2010). Particular attention is being paid to persons living with disabilities: Croatia signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and a new National Strategy of Persons with Disabilities 2007-2015 is being prepared.

The MDGs were discussed and jointly defined in 2004 by a panel of supervisors. They included representatives of eight Ministries and two government offices, some 20 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), an umbrella civil society organisation, and members of academia.

The Republic of Croatia issued its first Progress Report on the Achievement of the nationalized Millennium Development Goals in October 2006. The Report contains clearly defined statistical indicators which will monitor the progress the responsible bodies make in achieving the targets defined in 2004, though a national consensus. Statistical indicators have been aligned with the regular monitoring and data collection systems that

Croatian institutions collect on an annual basis. Progress Report on nationalized MDGs will be issued every two to three years and the next progress report is planned to be in 2009.

In the achievement of the MDG 1 - poverty and hunger, the results for Croatia are positive, since in the comparative analysis with the EU, the rates of relative poverty do not deviate essentially from the European average. Also, there seems to be a stagnant tendency of poverty in Croatia.

Concerning the second MDG, guaranteed education for all – Croatia proudly points out the fact that it has undergone one step further and is in the process of implementing a regulation that would stipulate mandatory secondary education. Furthermore, Strategic Goals set for the period from 2007 to 2013 also include - setting the conditions for better social inclusion, especially of the young with special needs, better school conditions, better working conditions for teachers, harmonisation of Croatian educational system with the European standards, and finally the upgrading of learning through lifetime.

The Croatian Government has adopted the strategy for creating «knowledge-based society», and numerous changes have been initiated in the entire science and education system. The crucial change in the education strategy involves pupil-tailored school. A new Curriculum for Primary School enables teachers to tailor their classes to their pupils, leaving enough time for the employment of the teaching methods that will best ensure success in educating every pupil to develop his or her abilities.

Even though globally, MDG 5 - the improvement of maternal health, is also lagging behind the scheduled goal, based on mortality indicators in Croatia, the level of health is probably better than could be expected, given the economic situation and as compared with several countries of the region. In health care services, major well intended reforms have been set in motion - like the legislative basis for more adequate structure and organization, including financing of health care, which has been strengthened. Nevertheless, there persist challenges in improving the primary health care system in terms of equity of access to care and the quality of care.

In autumn 2003, in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the Andrija Štampar School of Public Health in Zagreb, whose founder, Dr. Andrija Štampar, was the first President of the World Health Assembly, became one of three «Knowledge Hub» centres for Central and South-Eastern Europe. Joint efforts of this project focus on HIV/AIDS surveillance so as to enhance the system of prevention and monitoring of HIV/AIDS cases in the region, where according to WHO, estimates, more than a third of those suffering from AIDS remain unregistered. The Andrija Štampar School of Public Health was given a status of WHO Collaborative Centre for building infrastructure capacity for monitoring the HIV/AIDS epidemic. More than 450 participants from 52 countries from Europe, Africa and Middle East were educated in this Centre.

Concerning the MDG 6 - combat HIV/AIDS we are witnessing some progress such as scaling up of access to antiretroviral treatment with a large number of funded programmes through the Global Fund. Ensuring adequate access to essential drugs is a critical component of the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases as well as the extension of health services to the poor living in villages and urban slums.

In relation to the treatment of HIV/AIDS, Croatia has taken a number of measures on the national level concerning the achievements in this field. A Committee for the Prevention of HIV/AIDS has been established back in 1990 and three years later Croatian Government adopted a national Programme for Prevention of HIV/AIDS. Together with this a Reference Testing and treatment Centre was also established. Highly active antiretroviral treatment was introduced through the national Insurance scheme in early 1998 and is since then available to all persons living with HIV/AIDS in Croatia. Furthermore, in order to establish a truly multicultural approach the National HIV/AIDS Prevention Committee moved to the top Government level ensuring the highest possible commitment to fight the disease in Croatia.

As for MDG 8 – Global partnership for Development - Croatia has recently started its transformation from a recipient to a donor country. We remain fully engaged in the regional processes aimed at improving co-operation

and securing democracy, protecting human rights and minorities, and achieving higher levels of economic and social development.

As a first step regarding the institutional arrangements, the Interdepartmental Working Group for Development Policy Assessment and Advancement was set up in 2006, where most of state administration bodies as well as private sector and NGOs are represented.

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration the Department for International Development Cooperation was set up recently. The Department participates in the creation of the Croatian development policy and the ways of its implementation, taking into consideration its compatibility with the development cooperation policy of the EU and the UN Millennium Development Goals.

With regard to legal framework for development cooperation, at the moment we are in the process of drafting the Act on Development Cooperation and External Humanitarian Assistance as well as the National Strategy for Development Cooperation. Surely, our focus will be on the countries in the region, primarily Bosnia-Herzegovina but we will do our best to offer assistance to the countries most in need as well.

Funds for development co-operation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration have been earmarked for the first time in the State Budget for 2008. Other ministries will continue to carry out development projects as previously, within their own budget lines.

Croatia is convinced that the best way to achieve the MDGs is to integrate the global MDG targets into national strategies and support them by adequate financial and technical assistance from the international community. Governments should take firm ownership of and responsibility for its development agenda. Croatia recognizes that mobilizing financial resources for development and the effective use of those resources in developing countries are central to the global partnership for development.

Since member states are committed to give their reports on the progress of the MDGs biannually, the Republic of Croatia would like to point out that the next Progress Report is planned for 2009 and it will comprehend in detail the progress on all MDGs as well as the comparative analysis with the previous years.