***Republic of Croatia***

***Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy***

***Questionnaire on the provision of support to persons with disabilities***

1. ***Please provide information on the following services that are available for persons with disabilities in your country, including data on their coverage, geographic distribution and delivery arrangements, funding and sustainability, challenges and shortcoming in their implementation:***
2. ***Personal assistance***

In 2006, the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, that is, former Ministry of Family, Veterans’ Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity, in cooperation with associations of persons with disabilities started providing personal assistance service for people with the most severe type and degree of disability. Services that personal assistant provides relate to aid in the maintenance of personal hygiene, dressing and undressing, assistance in carrying out physiological needs, assistance with feeding and drinking, assistance related to physical needs (transfer bed - wheelchair, assistance in making phone calls, etc.), performing administrative tasks - going to the doctor (referrals, medical certificates, recipes), assistance in establishing and facilitating communication and accompaniment and assistance in various social activities.

Over the years the number of beneficiaries of that service has increased in accordance with the possibilities of providing financial support and the Ministry managed to find ways to increase the number of the said beneficiaries even in the recession years.

Until 2015, the funds for that service were provided exclusively from the state budget and in part from the revenue from the games of chance. Until 2013, the funds were provided through one-year projects, but since 2013 the service is provided through three-year programs of civil society organizations.

In order to increase the number of beneficiaries of personal assistance service, as well as to expand the categories of persons with disabilities, that is, to provide the service for people with intellectual and mental disabilities as well, in late 2014, the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy has announced an open call for proposals (grants) entitled “The expansion of personal assistance service for people with disabilities”, within the framework of the Operational Programme “Human Resources Development 2007 - 2013” which is co-financed by the European Social Fund. In this way, by the end of 2015, people with intellectual and mental disabilities were also included in the provision of service through a one-year program. The preparation for the continuation of the service provision is underway through the competition of the European Social Fund.

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| **Year** | **Number of beneficiaries** |
| 2006 | 78 |
| 2007 | 176 |
| 2008 | 338 |
| 2009 | 338 |
| 2010 | 554 |
| 2011 | 550 |
| 2012 | 631 |
| 2013 | 631 |
| 2014 | 631 |
| 2015 | 631 |
| 2016 | 1153 |

1. ***In-home, residential and community support***

Within the competence of the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, under the Social Welfare Act (“Official Gazette”, number 157/13 and 152/14, 99/15 and 52/16) every citizen of Croatia may exercise the established rights (pecuniary rights and services), under prescribed conditions. For people with disabilities the following rights are important:

* **the right to personal disability benefit** - financial compensation to which persons with severe disabilities or other severe and permanent changes in the health condition are entitled for the purpose of meeting their basic needs related to the inclusion in the daily life of the community;
* **the right to assistance and care** **benefit** - is intended for persons who are unable to meet their own basic living needs as a result of which they need assistance and care of another person in organizing meals, preparing and eating meals, purchasing groceries, house cleaning and housekeeping, dressing and undressing, personal hygiene, as well as in performing other basic living needs;
* **the right to the parent caregiver status or the status of a caregiver** - is recognized for one parent of a child with disabilities or person with disabilities who is fully dependent on the help and care of another person because in order to live he/she requires special care which includes carrying out medical and technical procedures for which the parent has been trained as recommended by a doctor, or when a child or a person is completely motionless, even with the aid of orthopaedic devices, or when a child or a person suffers from more types of severe damage (physical, mental, intellectual or sensory), which make him/her completely dependent on the help and care of another person in meeting their basic needs;
* **the right to employment benefit** - is intended for a person who has completed their primary, secondary or tertiary education, if he/she isn’t receiving unemployment benefit in accordance with other regulations, and the person is registered as unemployed in the relevant employment office and has been established as temporary unemployable by the center for vocational rehabilitation;
  + **the right to an in-home aid** - is intended for a person who indispensably requires an assistance of another person due to physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment, or permanent changes in the health condition, or for a person who indispensably requires an assistance of another person due to temporary changes in the health condition and for an older person for whom the Centre for Social Welfare has established and indispensably need for the assistance of another person;
    - **the right to psycho-social support** - services includes rehabilitation that fosters the development of cognitive, functional, communication and social skills of the beneficiary;
    - **the right to early intervention services** - service that includes professional stimulating assistance to children and professional and advisory assistance to their parents, including other family members and foster parents of children, when the child was established a developmental risk or has developmental disabilities;
    - **the right to a help with integration into programs of education and regular education (integration)** - is intended for educators and teachers in preschools and schools with an aim of including children with disabilities or young adults with disabilities into programs of regular preschools or schools;
    - **the right to a short-stay accommodation** - all-day or half-day accommodation for people with disabilities includes food services, maintenance of personal hygiene, health care, watching over, education, care, work activities, psychosocial rehabilitation, leisure time organization, organized transport, depending on the established needs of the beneficiary and his/her choice;
    - **the right to accommodation** - may include accommodation, food, care, health care, social work, psychosocial rehabilitation, physical therapy, occupational therapy, work activities, active spending of time, education, depending on the established needs of the beneficiary and his/her choice. The service may also include preparing beneficiaries for their return to their own family, foster family or for independent life and the preparation of a child for adoption or placement in the foster care;
    - **the right to organized housing** - social service which includes organizing for one or more persons permanent or occasional assistance of a professional or another person 24 hours a day, at home or outside the home, and providing for their basic living needs, as well as social, labour, cultural, educational, recreational and other needs.

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| ***THE TYPE OF RIGHT*** | ***NUMBER OF SERVICE BENEFICIARIES IN THE YEAR 2015*** |
| the right to personal disability benefit | 23 963 |
| the right to assistance and care | 67 471 |
| the right to the parent caregiver status or the status of a caregiver | 3 541 |
| the right to employment benefit | 3 390 |
| the right to an in-home aid | 4 890 |
| the right to psycho-social support | 1 276 |
| the right to early intervention services | 365 |
| the right to a help with integration into programs of education and regular education (integration) | 332 |
| the right to a short-stay accommodation | 3 071 |
| the right to accommodation | 18 519 |

In addition to that, in cooperation with associations of the deaf and deaf-blind persons, the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy provides interpreters/translators. The provision of that service begun in 2008, and now there are 64 interpreters/translators of the sign language employed through three-year programs. In that way the hearing impaired persons were provided with an easier access to all the necessary information from everyday life, especially in the educational system, health care and all other areas of life in the community.

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| Year | Number of interpreters |
| 2011 | 32 |
| 2012 | 32 |
| 2013 | 52 |
| 2014 | 52 |
| 2015 | 52 |
| 2016 | 64 |

As of 2013., in in cooperation with associations of the blind people, the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy provides a service of a sighted guide for the blind people who are dependent on others for moving about, and the assistance relates to accompaniment and assistance in various social activities, providing training for housework and assistance in carrying out administrative tasks.

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| Year | Number of sighted guides |
| 2013 | 16 |
| 2014 | 16 |
| 2015 | 16 |
| 2016 | 23,5 [[1]](#footnote-1) |

In accordance with the *Operational Plan for deinstitutionalisation and transformation of social welfare homes and other legal entities providing social welfare services in Croatia for the period 2014 - 2016*, an intense process of transformation of homes and deinstitutionalization of beneficiaries, children with disabilities and adults with disabilities who are placed in long-term accommodation facilities is underway in Croatia. To this end, the legislative and institutional framework for the provision of services that contribute to independent living was upgraded. Beneficiaries who have been accommodated in one of the social welfare institutions are now being deinstitutionalized in the form of their return to their their biological families and are being included in organized housing programs or placed in foster families.

During the first six months of 2016 (from January 1st to June 30th 2016) a total of 140 people with disabilities from 42 state homes for people with disabilities were deinstitutionalized. Of those 140 people, 22 were adults with mental disabilities, 19 were adults with physical, intellectual and/or sensory impairments and 99 were children with disabilities/disabled young people who have graduated from school (from the Centre for Education).

In order to further the process of deinstitutionalization, funds from the European Structural and Investment Funds were provided which will be used for the development of community based social services and improving infrastructure for the provision of social services in the community.

1. ***Support in decision-making, including peer support***

The new Family Act of 2015 initiated the process of alignment with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and it redefined the concept of foster care in a way that the existing institute of “parental care after coming of age” and the institute of full deprivation of business capacity were abandoned and the obligation of partial deprivation of business capacity was prescribed as a rule, but only in parts where it is really required for the protection of the rights of wards. In accordance with the new Act, decisions on the deprivation of business capacity made under previous regulations, within five years, will be re-examined in non-contentious proceedings for the purpose of restoring business capacity. The same Act also was introduces the institute of anticipated orders in the Croatian legislation.

At the time of drawing up the Draft proposal of the Family Act, the proposer of the provision estimated that it isn’t possible to completely abolished the institute of business capacity due to the inability of the system to ensure adequate legal protection as well as all other forms of support to people with disabilities. In the Republic of Croatia, on December 31st 2015 a total of 18 014 persons was deprived of business capacity, out of which 15 059 persons were fully deprived of business capacity. We are aware that such a situation in practice is not fully in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Furthermore, under the new Act a Centre for special guardianship was established as a public institution and its employees are appointed special guardians for children and persons deprived of business capacity in the proceedings before the courts. In that way the adequate protection was provided for persons in the proceedings before the competent courts, that is, their representation by professionals who are especially sensitized for working with that population was secured, regardless of parents and the Social Welfare Centre, and in accordance with international instruments in this area that make it obligatory for us to provide representation by an independent body for those categories of persons in court proceedings. We also emphasize that the drafting of the new Family Act is underway in the Republic of Croatia.

As a good example of practice in providing support to people with intellectual and mental disabilities, we emphasize the support to beneficiaries in the program of organized housing which, in addition to assistants, is provided by representatives. Representative provides support to individuals who use the services of the various services (housing, employment, training courses in the community, sports activities). In cooperation with other experts, representative also participates in the process of person centred planning for beneficiaries. According to the *Ordinance on the minimum requirements for the provision of social services*, the provision of social rehabilitation services by a representative includes, among other things, the support for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the new environment; encouraging and maintenance of cognitive and motor skills; developing skills for self-care related to their diet; development and maintenance of skills for self care related to personal hygiene, personal appearance and tidiness; conducting exercises for orientation and independent movement in familiar and unfamiliar environment; the establishment and maintenance of social relations; providing assistance in spacial and temporal orientation; strengthening in the acceptance of impairments; development of social and emotional qualities; application of various methods of support for the purpose of providing guidance and training in solving problems; developing the willingness for seeking help from people who are nearby; assistance in maintaining, developing and improving social skills; planning, preparing and practising skills for willingness and acceptance of other forms of care; developing work habits; participation in the organization of work activities in the local community, monitoring and implementing the plan of activities (occasional work activities and supported employment); encouraging socially acceptable behaviour of beneficiaries; motivation and development of interests, desires, initiative and creativity.

As for peer support, we would like to single out the example of good practice at the universities. In the academic year 2011/2012, a new university course “Peer support for students with disabilities” was introduced at the University of Zagreb. The condition for attending this course is that student who is applying for the course knows a student with disabilities who needs peer support and who agrees to receiving that kind of support from the student who is applying for the course. Also, another requirement is that the student who is applying for the course and the student with disabilities attend the same study program, within the same academic year.

The provision of peer support is based on individual plans created jointly by the student who is attending the course and the student with disabilities and is provided exclusively in the academic environment. Examples of peer support implementation are the following: assistance related to the arrival at the college, assistance in the classrooms, offices, libraries, student administration office etc., assistance in handling administrative procedures, assistance in notes keeping, support in the performance of exercises, verbal descriptions of visually presented contents, explaining concepts, joint work on academic tasks, support in different social situations, personal assistance when required (going to a restaurant, sanitary facilities, etc.). The course is designed as one of the measures aimed at equalizing opportunities for students with disabilities in higher education system in the Republic of Croatia, and it is created within the framework of the Tempus project “Education for Equal Opportunities at Croatian Universities - EduQuality”. The project is being implemented by the University of Zagreb and its Office for Students with Disabilities and the Committee for Students with Disabilities. The same course was also introduced at the University of Rijeka and the University of Zadar.

Another example of good practice is peer counselling - support to newly disabled people who are receiving their primary rehabilitation at the Special Hospital for Medical Rehabilitation “Varaždinske Toplice” - which is held once a month in the form of group and/or individual meetings and is organized by the Association of Persons with Disabilities.

1. ***Communication support, including support for augmentative and alternative communication.***

In addition to the services of an interpreter/translator for the deaf persons and the services of an intervenor for the deaf-blind persons, that we mentioned in more detail in the above section b), we would like to note that the Republic of Croatia adopted *Law on the Croatian Sign Language and Other Communication Systems of Deaf and Deaf-blind Persons in the Republic of Croatia*, which entered into force on August 1st 2015. It is a way of ensuring the right to use Croatian sign language and other communication systems for the deaf and deaf-blind persons (simultaneous sign and verbal communication: hand alphabet, subtitling or typing, face and lips reading, tactile alphabet and technical aids) in accordance with their individual needs and personal preferences. By adopting the said Law, the aim was to equalise opportunities for the deaf and deaf-blind persons in terms of their access to social, economic and cultural environment and provide them the equal exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms by recognizing the right to use sign language and other communication systems. This implies the recognition of the right to use sign language and other systems of communication in all areas of the life of a deaf and deaf-blind person, such as education, health, cultural events and the like. By adopting the said Law, Croatia has confirmed its national sign language and the right of deaf and deaf-blind people to use it as their primary language, that is, it gives them the right to choose the means of communication they prefer. The Law defines the right of deaf and deaf-blind people as: the use of communication systems of the deaf and deaf-blind people, providing information via the communication system of the deaf and deaf-blind people and education using communication system of the deaf and deaf-blind people.

1. ***Please explain how persons with disabilities can access information about the existing services referred to in question one, including referral procedures, eligibility, criteria and application requirements.***

In 2014, Croatian Government initiated the project e-Citizens which ensures the communication between the citizens and the public sector in one place, on the Internet, through the portal which gathers information on the work of the Croatian Government, its ministries and public services. Project e-Citizens is adapted for people with disabilities. Currently available functionalities are large print and adjustment of accessibility for the visually impaired. We note that Guidelines for the Development of the Central Government Portal contain recommendations regarding the the availability of websites for the public sector bodies Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.

As for the rights within the social welfare system that were mentioned in the answer under number 1, a catalogue of rights of the persons with disabilities within the social welfare system was published on the website of the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy and is regularly updated, that lists all the rights within the social welfare system, conditions for their recognition and competent institutions.

*National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* 2016 - 2020, stipulates for the creation of a unified catalogue of rights of the persons with disabilities, which will also be published on the website of the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy.

1. ***Please elaborate on how these services respond to the specific needs of persons with disabilities throughout their life cycle (infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and older age) and how is service delivery ensured in the transition periods between life cycle stages.***

Various life situations lead to social exclusion and poverty. So families who have a child with disabilities and people with disabilities are faced with numerous constraints and obstacles in the process of their active inclusion in the community. In order to provide the necessary care and attention to the child with disabilities, one of the parents often remains unemployed which brings the family in a financial disadvantage. There is no doubt that disability causes additional costs because of which these families need support from the community. Taking into account such life situations, that is, the fact that there is a two-side relationship between disability and poverty, the Social Welfare Act regulates the right to the parent caregiver status or the status of a caregiver that provides the parent with the status of an employed person. A parent caregiver or a caregiver is entitled to financial compensation, pension insurance, health insurance and rights during unemployment as an employed person under special regulations. Through its Social Welfare Centre, the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy calculates and pays compensation and all contributions for compulsory insurance and the funds for this purpose are provided from the state budget. A parent caregiver or a caregiver is entitled to compensation during temporary inability to provide care due to illness, as well as during a vacation, when he/she is not performing the work of the caregiver, while the child is ensured a temporary accommodation during the vacation of a parent caregiver under the provisions of this Act, and if the child is kept in a hospital for treatment for no longer than two months. Also, a parent caregiver or a caregiver can use the vacation in the duration of four weeks during the year.

In addition to that, we would like to stress out that the early intervention service is significant for children with disabilities. In order to develop and ensure the accessibility of early diagnosis and intervention service for children with disorders from the autistic spectrum, an initiative of an interdepartmental and transdisciplinary approach was launched with the aim of providing support to children and families by establishing a uniform system of support, both for children and their families. For this purpose, in April 2014 the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Science, Education and Sport and UNICEF signed an Agreement on Cooperation in the realization of technical support by UNICEF for the implementation of the project “Early diagnosis and early intervention for children with autistic spectrum disorders”. With the aim of developing an early intervention system for children with disabilities, one of the measures from the *National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* 2016 - 2020 is to “Improve the system of screening, early diagnosis and early intervention for children with disabilities”. The development of the Protocol on the Early Intervention Procedure was envisioned within the same framework.

Children with disabilities are entitled to psycho-social support and the short-stay accommodation service (services described in the answer under number 1), as well as the right to reimbursement of travel expenses incurred for the purpose of education. The reimbursement of travel expenses is intended for children with disabilities who attend secondary education classes that follow a special curriculum outside their place of residence or classes of self-care training, and there is no need to recognize his/her right to accommodation or organized housing service.

Under the Social Welfare Act, and with the aim of integrating children with disabilities into the regular education system, professionals in preschools and schools are provided with assistance for the inclusion of such children in the regular education (integration). In addition to that, for the purpose of integrating children with disabilities into the mainstream education system and the community, funding has been provided for the academic year 2006/2007 for 2 030 teaching assistants for a total of 2 268 students with disabilities who attend primary and secondary schools. The drafting of the *Ordinance on teaching assistants and professional communication intermediaries* that defines appropriate programs and forms of education and support for students with disabilities is currently underway.

Services intended for adults with disabilities (right to an in-home aid, psycho-social support, short-stay accommodation service, accommodation and organized housing service, personal assistance, interpreters/translators and sighted guide) are mentioned in more detail in the answer under number 1.

In addition to the above mentioned services, children with disabilities and adults with disabilities are entitled to various financial supports on the basis of their disability, the aim of which is to provide them with the necessary support for their involvement in the community life, irrespective of age (in addition to the financial supports mentioned in the answer under number 1, to which they are entitled within the social welfare system, these also include financial supports within other systems).

Beneficiary is entitled to all rights according to the principle of free choice and under the conditions prescribed by the law.

1. ***Please provide information on the number of certified sign language interpreters and deaf-blind interpreters available in your country.***

Within the of Croatian Society of Professional Communications Intermediaries for the Deaf People, there are 45 licensed communication intermediaries who have completed non-formal education due to the absence of formal forms of education. Education will begin this year and it will be implemented though the Adult Education Institution “Adiutor “. Education that the above mentioned communication intermediaries completed was held within the framework of the The Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of the City of Zagreb and the Croatian Society of Professional Communications Intermediaries for the Deaf People. Level of education is listed on the certificates issued by the Society of Professional Communications Intermediaries after the completion of education.

Title “licensed” communications intermediaries is used for persons who had prior knowledge of the Croatian sign language before starting the education and have attended 218 hours of training. The majority of them are employed within the project of providing the services of interpreters/translators which is financed through the tenders of the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, while some are employed through projects financed by the City of Zagreb.

1. ***Please provide information on the existence of any partnership between State institutions and private service providers (e.g., non-governmental organizations, for-profit service providers) for the provision of support to persons with disabilities.***

Civil society organizations are important partners in the development and provision of services to persons with disabilities in the community and in partnership with government bodies and local and regional self-governments they are implementing a number of projects and programs aimed at supporting people with disabilities and their families.

For the purpose of a more intensive inclusion of children with disabilities, young people and adults with disabilities in the community life, the development of various services in the community is continuously promoted and a number of programs and projects of civil society organizations is financially supported.

As transformation of institutions and deinstitutionalization of beneficiaries is one of the priority areas of the social welfare system, great attention is being dedicated to the expansion of the network of various community services and programs for the prevention of institutionalization, taking into account the regional uniformity. Civil society organizations as providers of organized housing services and other services for the prevention of institutionalization, that is, for keeping the beneficiaries in their families and their local communities, play a huge role in that process. The Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy signed contracts on the provision of social services in the network of social services with different service providers (associations, religious organizations, other legal persons and sole proprietorships).

It is also important to point out that *Quality Standards of Social Services* are developed within the framework of the social welfare system development, as part of broader reforms aimed at modernizing and developing the social welfare system, with the aim of providing services of good quality beneficiaries. In 2014, the *Ordinance on the quality standards of social services* was adopted, which prescribes seventeen quality standards that apply to all social services. The standards are divided into four broad areas that highlight key aspects of social services: focus on the beneficiary, protection of rights, leadership and management, and the environment.

As for the funding of civil society organizations, we would like to point out that the Croatian Government adopted the *Regulation on the Criteria, Standards and Procedures for Financing and Contracting Programmes and Projects of Public Benefit Interest Implemented by Associations* laying down the criteria, standards and procedures that competent government authorities, government offices and bodies and other public institutions, that handle funds from public sources, use in financing and contracting programs and/or projects of public benefit interest implemented by association*.* Public sources include the state budget funds, including a special-purpose funds from games of chance and the funds from the budgets of counties, cities and municipalities, as well as funds from public funds and revenues from public companies and other public institutions, the European Union funds and foreign public sources. The financing of programs and projects is carried out through public tenders which ensures the transparency of financial resources allocation and the receipt of the largest possible number of eligible applications, that is, the selection of the best programs and projects, while the general public is informed on the priority areas of action. The Ordinance provides for exceptions when financial resources are allocated directly, without public tender. Once a year and within its scope, the provider of financial resources determines priority areas for the allocation of financial resources to programs and projects in accordance with the measures of the programs, strategies, plans and other strategic documents at the national or local and regional level, establishing goals and priorities in addressing problems related to the pubic benefit, public interest or public purposes.

In addition to that, each year the Croatian Government adopts the Decree on the criteria for determining the beneficiaries and the method of allocation of a portion of income from games of chance for financing the programs of organizations, among which are organizations dealing with the problems and needs of people with disabilities.

In cooperation with the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, the National Foundation for Civil Society Development 2012 - 2016, provides funds for basic activities of national associations of persons with disabilities. Until 2016 they were provided though one-year projects, but since 2016, in order to ensure the sustainability, they are provided through three-year programs. Funds for the work of associations of persons with disabilities are also provided by local and regional self-governments on the territory of which they operate.

1. ***Please describe to what extent and how are persons with disabilities and their representative organisations involved in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of support services.***

When creating policies and laws, the role of people with disabilities and their organizations is extremely important and they are recognized as a very efficient and valuable partners and active stakeholders, and the Republic of Croatia has made significant steps in improving the normative framework for consultations with the interested public. In order to enable a greater number of citizens, especially people with disabilities, to propose public policy measures, network systems and communication with the public are being intensively developed.

Act on Regulatory Impact Assessment (2011) and the Regulation on the Implementation of the Regulatory Impact Assessment Procedure (2012), established the regulatory impact assessment system in the Republic of Croatia and improved decision and policy making. Under the above mentioned regulations, all relevant and interested parties are given the right to participate in decision-making procedure.All public authorities responsible for drafting laws and subordinate legislation are obligated to publish on their websites the drafts of laws and other regulations, that is, to conduct the consultation process with the interested public. In addition to that, after the consultation, they are obligated to inform the interested public via their website on all accepted and unaccepted comments and suggestions. This allows the interested public, including the representatives of associations of persons with disabilities, as well as the persons with disabilities, to use their knowledge, experience and expertise to influence the policy of the Croatian Government on behalf of groups and interests they represent.

In 2014, works were initiated to establish the e-counselling portal, as a unique online system for consultation with the public in the process of adopting new laws, regulations and acts. The system allows the citizens to track the steps in drafting of a particular document, from workgroups to its adoption, and gives them the possibility to directly participate in the drafting by providing their comments on the proposed text during the consultation with the public.

In addition to that, we would like to point out that the Committee for Persons with Disabilities of the Croatian Government forwarded to the government bodies who are responsible for legislative drafting recommendation on the inclusion of representatives of persons with disabilities in the working groups for legislative drafting, that is, in the earlier stages of the legislative drafting process. All government bodies are invited to include in the process of adopting regulations that are in any way related to children with disabilities/persons with disabilities as many of their representatives and to appointed them members of working groups, since their knowledge and contribution are of key importance, with the aim of creating legislation of better quality.

Active participation in the work of various working groups formed in the government bodies, that are responsible for legislative drafting, enables direct contacts with representatives of associations of persons with disabilities who are able to provide current information about the problems that this population is faced with.

1. ***Please provide any other relevant information and statistics (including surveys, censuses, administrative data, reports, and studies) related to the provision of support to persons with disabilities in your country.***

According to the data of the Croatian Register of Persons with Disabilities, on 7 October 2016 there were 512 023 people with disabilities in the Republic of Croatia. Of that number, 203,965 are female and 308,058 are male. In that number of registered persons 33 349 are children (in the age group 0-18 years), of which 12,575 are girls and 20,774 are boys.

The first time Croatian Bureau of Statistics collected data on persons with disabilities was in the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in 2001. For people with disabilities answers were collected to questions regarding “cause of disability” and the “physical mobility of people with disabilities”. Based on data collected in the Census, aggregated statistical data and indicators were created and published, as well as the study entitled “Population by disabilities”. Data were taken from statements of persons who provided information to the enumerator and as such give only a general picture of people with disabilities on the territory of Croatia. In the Census of population, Households and Dwellings, that was carried out in April 2011, the number of questions about people with disabilities was increased, and in the Questionnaire, that is, the form used for each person, there was 6 questions related to the disability of a persons and those are: is person experiencing difficulties in performing everyday activities due to some long-term illness, disability or age; type of difficulty; physical mobility of a person; cause of difficulties; does the person requires the assistance of another person in performing everyday activities; does the person use the assistance of another person in performing everyday activities. The statistical report is available on the website of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics.

Availability of appropriate data on disability is a prerequisite for planning appropriate measures and adopting programs for people with disabilities. Recognizing this problem, the Republic of Croatia adopted The Law on the Croatian Registry of Persons with Disability (2001), which is kept in the Croatian Institute for Public Health, and it became operational in mid-2002. The register of people with disabilities has become the main register for confirming the status of persons with disabilities. Every year a report on people with disabilities is issued, which is available on the website of the Croatian Institute for Public Health.

Research and development is one of the areas of action listed in the *National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*, which is the most important strategic document for persons with disabilities in Croatia. It is important to mention that five qualitative studies were conducted during the implementation of the above mentioned strategy (from 2007 until 2015) in the field of autism, intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, neuromuscular diseases and women with disabilities the results of which were published in the form of scientific papers. In addition to that, 17 scientific and research papers were published on disability in national and international indexed journals.

In order to further the implementation of the UN Convention and following the implementation and the results of the *National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2007 - 2015* and the Final Recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy as a coordinator for the implementation of the UN Convention in Croatia, started preparing the new National Strategy in joint cooperation with all relevant authorities, representatives of associations of persons with disabilities and representatives of scientific institutions.

1. One sighed guide is employed only part time. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)