

Croatia Country Fiche 2025

This one-pager highlights the most pressing issues in each country, based on findings from Eurochild members. For a full analysis and detailed recommendations, see the upcoming flagship report.

Pressing Issues

- **Child poverty:** Roma children, children with disabilities, and those in rural areas or single-parent families are most affected. Access to social services and benefits remains fragmented and delayed. Currently, over 120,000 applications for social benefits are waiting to be processed, with delays due to under-staffing in public administration systems.
- **Education & inclusion:** Despite national strategies, implementation of inclusive education is slow and uneven. Roma, migrant, children with disabilities and low-income children remain disproportionately excluded; educators lack training and support.
- **Child protection:** Legal frameworks exist, but monitoring and implementation are weak. Despite reforms to strengthen family support and prevent child-family separation, the number of children entering the child protection system continues to rise. Regional disparities, staff shortages, and underdeveloped early intervention persist. Foster care quality and support for children with disabilities remain insufficient.
- **Mental health:** Rising rates of stress and depression among adolescents; long waits for psychiatric care due to staff shortages. Mental health support in schools is limited and underfunded.
- **Online safety:** Cyberbullying, grooming, and online sexual exploitation are growing concerns. Positive practices include the Centre for Safer Internet and the “Red Button” reporting tool.
- **Early childhood development:** Coverage of early childhood education and care (ECEC) remains low, with long waiting lists, high costs, and poor access in rural areas. A national Early Intervention Plan (2025–2030) is under development.
- **Housing:** High housing costs and limited social housing put families at risk of poverty and overcrowding. Roma and large families are especially affected.
- **Child participation:** Mechanisms such as student councils and the Ombudsperson’s Young Advisors Network exist, but participation often remains symbolic and lacks impact on policy decisions.

Key Recommendations

- **Reduce child poverty:** Develop universal, community-based services; expand child allowance; introduce child budgeting and systematic monitoring of investments in children. **Child Guarantee:** Ensure stable funding, clear institutional responsibility, and integration of local models into national policy with NGO and child participation. Remove administrative burdens to access social and disability benefits and reinforce personnel of providers.
- **Inclusive education:** Ensure equal access for Roma, migrant, and disabled children; strengthen teacher training and inclusive support. A national strategy on digital equity focused on disadvantaged children is needed.
- **Strengthen protection systems:** Improve regional service quality; address staff shortages; prioritise family-based and community care.
- **Mental health:** Increase funding and staff capacity; ensure early intervention and equitable access nationwide.
- **Protect children online:** Strengthen prevention, education, and inter-agency coordination to combat online abuse.
- **Invest in ECD:** Guarantee universal, affordable access to quality early learning; improve data on service provision and children with developmental difficulties.
- **Housing & social inclusion:** Expand affordable and social housing; prevent evictions; ensure targeted subsidies for vulnerable families.

Contributing Organisations:

Network of Associations for Children - is a non-profit organisation that advocates for children's rights and promotes the interests and welfare of children. Contact: Natalija Stankovic (natalija.stankovic@djeca-prva.hr). **FICE Croatia** promotes the active participation of care leavers in the society and advocating for the best interest of the child insuring that no more children stay in institutions. Contact: Petra Hrvoj (petra.hrvoj@gmail.com)

