

Croatia's SDG Progress (VNR 2023)



SDG 1	NO POVERTY End poverty in all its forms everywhere
1. Legislative Framework and National Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia has implemented a new strategic and legislative framework focused on continuous reforms in areas such as the pension system, labor market, employment, social welfare, and healthcare. • The National Plan for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period 2021–2027 has been created and adopted, aligning with international and national strategic documents, including the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. Economic Support Packages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Croatian Government allocated EUR 6.8 billion through five aid packages to address the consequences of global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy crisis caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine. These measures aimed to prevent an increase in the prices of essential commodities and provided one-time aid to vulnerable groups.
3. Social Welfare System and Protection of the Elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Plan for the Development of Social Services for the period 2021–2027 focuses on socially vulnerable groups and sets priorities and measures to achieve specific objectives. • Introduction of a national allowance for elderly persons to contribute to reducing poverty and social exclusion among the elderly.
4. Healthcare and National Recovery Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021–2027, including the "Healthcare" component, to ensure an accessible, functional, and efficient public healthcare system.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and energy crisis, posed significant challenges in implementing effective measures. The need for rapid responses to unforeseen challenges requires continuous adaptation. • Economic impoverishment and mental health issues are some other problems faced by the country.
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SDG 2	ZERO HUNGER End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
1. Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan for the period 2023–2027, aligning with the Agriculture Strategy 2030 to support the transformation of Croatian agriculture, including modernization, generational renewal, and environmental practices.
2. National Aquaculture Development Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of the National Aquaculture Development Plan for the period until 2027, focusing on increasing productivity, competitiveness, economic reconstruction, and encouraging innovations in the aquaculture sector.
3. Improvement of Food Availability for Vulnerable Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the National Plan for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period 2021–2027, with specific objectives to improve the availability of free meals for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
4. Increase in Productivity in Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investments from European funds and the state budget to encourage public and private investments in the agri-food sector. A 28% increase in labor productivity in agriculture in Croatia in 2022 compared to 2019. Adoption of the Agriculture Strategy 2030 to increase the value of agricultural production, focusing on competitiveness, environmental sustainability, and rural development.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite the increase in labor productivity, Croatian agriculture still lags behind the European Union average, indicating a need for further improvements to enhance competitiveness. Ensuring effective implementation of the Agriculture Strategy 2030, Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan, and the National Aquaculture Development Plan requires efficient coordination and adequate funding.
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SDG 3	GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
1. National Health Development Plan (2021-2027)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed and adopted to improve the healthcare system and health outcomes. Focus on promoting health, preventing diseases, and addressing environmental factors affecting health. Aligned with the National Development Strategy 2030.
2. Maternal and Child Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low maternal mortality ratio (0–5 per 100,000 live births) and infant mortality ratio (around 3 per 1,000 live births).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participation in preventive check-ups, vaccinations, and national screening processes for toddlers and children. • Collaboration with the Euro-Peristat Network for perinatal health.
3. Non-Infectious Diseases and Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the National Programme "Living Healthy" to promote physical, mental, and sexual health. • Development of a comprehensive national program for preventing and controlling chronic non-infectious diseases. • Adoption of the Strategic Framework for Mental Health until 2030, focusing on prevention, early detection, and psycho-social interventions.
4. Cancer Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of the National Cancer Strategic Framework until 2030. • Implementation of early cancer detection programs for breast, colorectal, and lung cancers. • Ongoing efforts to introduce programs for melanoma and cervical cancer detection.
5. Addiction Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of the National Strategy on Combating Addiction until 2030. • Focus on reducing demand for addictive substances, improving health and safety, and decreasing associated risks and harm.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data indicates that the participation of adults in education activities is lower than the European Union average. Overcoming barriers to adult education and increasing participation rates remain challenges. • While reforms are underway, the full implementation of inclusive education for persons with disabilities, including the development of curricula and support systems, is an ongoing challenge.
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SDG 4	QUALITY EDUCATION Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
1. Secondary Education and Vocational Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts are underway to increase enrollment in general education programs, particularly in STEM fields. The vocational education system is undergoing a curriculum reform, focusing on outcome-oriented curricula that align with labor market needs.
2. National Plan for Development of Education System (2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia has adopted a National Plan to modernize the education and training system, focusing on access to early childhood education, improving outcomes in primary and secondary education, enhancing employability through vocational

	education, increasing adult education participation, and integrating digital technologies in education.
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SDG 5	GENDER EQUALITY
	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girl
1. National Plan for Gender Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia adopted the National Plan for Gender Equality for the period until 2027, along with the Action Plan for its implementation by 2024. This plan aligns with the horizontal priorities of the National Development Strategy 2030, emphasizing better coordination and responsible realization of gender equality objectives.
2. National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopted in 2022, this plan aims to achieve a unified social response to sexual violence and harassment. It focuses on protecting victims, promoting their rights, and raising public awareness about the unacceptable and detrimental nature of violent behavior.
3. National Children’s Rights Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia has implemented a plan for the protection of children against all forms of violence, providing additional expert support for child victims. Measures include supporting children exposed to domestic violence and improving efforts to prevent and combat bullying in educational institutions.
4. Projects Combating Domestic Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects funded through the European Social Fund, such as "Stop violence against women and domestic violence – No excuse for violence," aim to improve the system for preventing and protecting women against violence. This includes raising public awareness, strengthening expert capacities, and enhancing interdepartmental cooperation.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While Croatia has introduced various initiatives and plans, ensuring the comprehensive implementation of these measures and addressing all aspects of gender equality remains an ongoing challenge. • Although progress has been made, there is a need for continuous efforts to ensure equal representation of women in leadership roles, including politics, business, and other sectors.
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SDG 6	CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
1. Water Management Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia is actively following guidelines from its Water Management Strategy, which involves legislative, planning, program, and project-level activities. The River Basin Management Plan for 2022–2027 outlines goals for the quality of surface waters, including coastal and territorial sea waters, emphasizing sustainable water management.
2. EU Directive Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia has ensured access to healthy and safe water for human consumption by implementing the 2020 Directive of the European Parliament and the Council on the quality of water intended for human consumption. The directive is aligned with the "Right2Water" citizens' initiative, and its transposition into Croatian legislation involves close cooperation with relevant bodies.
3. Agricultural Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Agricultural Strategy 2030 emphasizes the need to improve access to irrigation water for enhanced agricultural productivity. The Multiannual Programme for the Construction of Water Regulation and Protection Facilities and Amelioration Facilities and the National Project for Irrigation and Agricultural Land and Water Management aim to achieve this, supported by funding in the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan.
4. Cohesion Fund and Recovery Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia has utilized Cohesion Fund allocations and resources from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021–2026 for water sector investments. These projects are expected to improve waste water treatment systems for an additional 200,000 citizens and enhance water supply for 45,000 citizens.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving further improvement in access to safe water, especially in remote villages, poses technical and financial challenges. • While investments are being made to improve water utility infrastructure, balancing development between urban and rural areas, and ensuring equitable access, remains a challenge.
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SDG 7	AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
1. Renewable Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia is making significant progress in utilizing renewable energy sources, covering 31.3% of its energy needs through renewables in 2020. The country's commitment to the European Green Deal and the adoption of the Low-Carbon Development Strategy until 2030 emphasize intensive development in renewable energy.

2. Energy Security and Clean Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The operationalization of the LNG terminal enhances Croatia's energy stability and security of gas supply. The Zlobin-Omišalj evacuation pipeline and the connection to the Rogatec-Zabok gas pipeline integrate Croatia into European gas flows. Efforts are directed towards decarbonization, providing citizens with clean, sustainable, and affordable energy.
3. Hydrogen Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croatia is actively promoting the establishment of a hydrogen economy, essential for achieving clean energy goals and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The "North Adriatic Hydrogen Valley" project, in collaboration with Slovenia and northern Italy, aims to use hydrogen as a replacement for natural gas, coal, and oil in carbon-intensive industries and the transport sector.
4. Energy Renovation Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various programs, such as the Energy Renovation of Multi-Apartment Buildings, Energy Renovation of Cultural Heritage Buildings, Energy Poverty Reduction, Urban Green Infrastructure Development, Circular Management of Space and Buildings, and Energy Renovation of Public Sector Buildings, are developed to reduce annual energy needs, improve energy efficiency, and integrate renewable energy sources in buildings.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While Croatia covers a substantial portion of its energy needs through renewables, there's a reliance on imported oil and gas. Reducing this dependence poses a challenge for achieving sustainable energy security. Achieving decarbonization goals requires significant efforts, especially in sectors with high carbon intensity. Addressing challenges related to the reduction of CO2 emissions while maintaining energy affordability is crucial.
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SDG 8	<p style="text-align: center;">DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</p>
1. Euro Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croatia adopted the euro on January 1, 2023, becoming the 20th member of the euro area. This move enhances economic integration and stability, aligning Croatia with the broader European economic framework.
2. National Recovery and Resilience Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021–2026 is instrumental in addressing economic challenges. It triggers significant reforms and investments across various policy areas, contributing to Croatia's economic recovery.
3. Youth Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Youth Guarantee scheme aims to improve youth employment, prevent NEET status, and integrate young people into society. Measures under the National Plan for Work, Occupational Safety, and Employment focus on increasing the employment rate and ensuring effective protection of workers.

4. Employment of Persons with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia promotes the employment of persons with disabilities through the National Plan for the Equalisation of Opportunities. Integrative workshops and co-financing projects for integrating persons with disabilities into the tourism labor market are notable initiatives.
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Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High inflation levels pose a challenge for economic stability. The government's efforts to manage and reduce inflation need to be closely monitored and adapted to evolving economic conditions. • Despite initiatives for labor market reforms, there may be challenges in reducing labor market segmentation and ensuring fair working conditions, especially considering the impact of the ongoing economic and geopolitical uncertainties.
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SDG 9	INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
1. European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia ranks 22nd among EU Member States, falling into the "Emerging innovators" category, with performance at 66.5% of the EU average.
2. Smart Specialization and Industrial Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia is in the process of approving a new Smart Specialization Strategy (up to 2029) to make its economy more sustainable, competitive, and export-oriented. • Industrial transition activities are focused on specific regions (Pannonian, Adriatic, and Northern Croatia), aligning with the National Development Strategy 2030 and the EU Territorial Agenda 2030.
3. Digital Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia has set ambitious goals for digital connectivity, aiming to provide broadband speeds of 100 Mbps and above for all households and businesses. • Initiatives include the National Plan for Broadband Development, the Digital Croatia Strategy 2032, and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021–2026.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While Croatia has high household broadband coverage, rural areas still face insufficient coverage (47%). Bridging this gap remains a challenge, affecting digital inclusivity and economic development in rural regions. • High prices of broadband internet, consistently higher than the EU average, hinder the increased use of high-speed broadband services. Addressing this challenge is crucial for promoting widespread access to digital technologies.
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SDG 10	REDUCED INEQUALITIES Reduce inequality within and among countries
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1. National Plan for Children’s Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Plan for Children’s Rights (2022–2026) focuses on fighting discrimination and social exclusion of children. It addresses the difficulties faced by children at risk of social exclusion, ensuring access to essential services like early childhood education, adequate housing, and quality nutrition.
2. National Plan for the Development of Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan aims to increase the availability of social services and create new services, focusing on non-institutional services, deinstitutionalization, and the development of foster care. This contributes to the integration of vulnerable groups into the community, promoting equal opportunities.
3. Regional Development Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croatia addresses regional inequalities through Development Agreements, such as the one for Slavonia, Baranja, and Srijem, focusing on infrastructure and development projects. Special programs target the development of specific areas like Dalmatian Zagora, Gorski Kotar, Lika, and Banovina.
4. Migration Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croatia signed the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, emphasizing a multilateral approach to global migration challenges. The country supports a comprehensive approach to regulating mixed migration flows, respecting the principle of solidarity, and has resettled citizens from third countries.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some regions, such as Zagreb and coastal areas, have a higher standard of living than others. Achieving balanced regional development remains a challenge, requiring ongoing efforts to address disparities. Ensuring the availability of social services, especially in areas where they are insufficient, is a challenge. Continued efforts are needed to expand non-institutional services and improve the integration of vulnerable social groups.
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SDG 11	<p style="text-align: center;">SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p>
1. Affordable Housing Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croatia has implemented programs like the Programme of State-Subsidised Housing Construction (POS) to provide affordable housing. The state subsidizes housing construction, supporting young families in acquiring homes at a lower cost than the market price.
2. Green and Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croatia has adopted programs such as the Urban Green Infrastructure Development Programme and the Circular Management of Space and Buildings Development Programme. These programs aim to create sustainable, resilient, safe, and well-organized cities by promoting green infrastructure, biodiversity preservation, and circular management of space and buildings.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air pollution, particularly from particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5), remains a significant challenge in urban areas, especially during stable meteorological conditions. The main sources are domestic fireplaces and traffic. • Regional inequalities, both in economic aspects and living standards, pose a challenge. Some regions, like Zagreb and coastal areas, have higher standards of living compared to other parts of the country.
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SDG 12	RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
1. Consumer Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia has established the "All for Consumers" portal to inform consumers about their rights and provide information on sustainable consumption. • The portal includes details on the environmental impact of products, ecolabeling, green public procurement, and waste sorting. • National events on World Consumer Rights Day are dedicated to sustainable development.
2. Green Public Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia encourages green public procurement, with about 10% of contracts based on green criteria. • The government adopted the Decision on green public procurement to introduce green criteria into procurement procedures. • A national platform dedicated to green public procurement has been established to share information and examples of good practice.
3. Reducing Food Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia adopted the Plan for Prevention and Reduction of Food Waste (2023–2028) to increase food donations and reduce waste. • In 2022, approximately 286,000 tonnes of food were discarded annually. • Initiatives include the "Reduce Food Waste, Cook for your Guests" project in the tourism sector.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing landfills by the end of 2024 poses a significant challenge, although progress has been made. Continuous efforts are required to remediate existing landfills and establish modern waste disposal and treatment facilities. • Despite initiatives to reduce food waste, challenges exist in achieving the ambitious targets of the Plan for Prevention and Reduction of Food Waste (2023–2028).
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SDG 13	CLIMATE ACTION Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
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1. Sustainable Consumption and Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia has implemented six programs from the UN's 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns. These programs focus on consumer information, sustainable public procurement, sustainable food systems, sustainable lifestyles and education, sustainable buildings and construction, and sustainable tourism.
2. Sustainability Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia introduced non-financial reporting for certain business entities in 2017. Amendments to the Accounting Act are expected in 2024 to improve sustainability reporting, aligning with EU standards. The Sustainable Financing Support Forum is planned to enhance the financial sector's contribution to sustainable goals.
3. Climate Change Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia is committed to the Paris Agreement and has developed a national framework for climate action. The Low-Carbon Development Strategy outlines measures for a transition in key sectors, and Croatia shares the EU's climate ambition for emissions reduction and climate neutrality.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a Mediterranean country, Croatia faces increasing economic damage from climate change, including extreme weather events. The vulnerability to climate-related hazards, such as floods, fires, and heatwaves, poses challenges in managing the impacts on the environment and communities. • While Croatia has made progress in waste management and circular material use, there may be challenges in fully transitioning to a circular economy. Continued efforts are needed to improve waste management practices, recycling rates, and reduce environmental impact.
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SDG 14	<p style="text-align: center;">LIFE BELOW WATER</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</p>
1. Natura 2000 Network Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia aims to have 30% of its sea under national jurisdiction protected by 2030. Efforts include the development of management plans for Natura 2000 marine areas, covering over 40% by the end of 2023.
2. Reducing Eutrophication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia is monitoring marine waters for eutrophication, with data showing a decrease in the affected marine area to 11 km² in 2022. Ongoing efforts align with the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
3. EU Directive Transposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia has transposed the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/EC into national legislation. Monitoring and Observation Systems assess the environmental status of the Adriatic Sea, including marine litter and eutrophication.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia faces the challenge of balancing economic development with the conservation of marine resources. Ensuring sustainable practices in industries like tourism, agriculture, and fisheries is crucial for long-term environmental health. • Implementing integrated coastal zone management presents challenges in coordinating various aspects, including spatial planning, environmental protection, cultural heritage preservation, and economic activities.
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SDG 15	<p style="text-align: center;">LIFE ON LAND</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</p>
1. Nature-based Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia emphasizes "nature-based solutions" as tools for climate change adaptation and mitigation, contributing to ecosystem and biodiversity preservation.
2. Protection of Agricultural Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Agricultural Land Act ensures special protection for agricultural land, addressing issues like degradation due to intensive agricultural production, pollution, erosion, and conversion. Conditions for good agricultural and environmental practice are prescribed to qualify for state support.
3. Demining of Mine-suspected Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia is actively working on demining activities to eliminate the mine danger throughout the country by 2026, aligning with international treaties, including the Ottawa Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia faces the challenge of addressing the unfavorable conservation status of 33% of species and habitat types, as well as an unknown status for 54% of them. Additional efforts are needed to improve biodiversity conservation. • Meeting the new and ambitious biodiversity policies by 2030 poses challenges, including the need to improve the conservation status of at least 30% of species and habitat types.
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SDG 16	<p style="text-align: center;">PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p>
1. Anti-Corruption Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adoption of the Anti-Corruption Strategy 2021–2030 focuses on strengthening mechanisms, transparency, and public involvement. • New laws, such as the Whistleblower Protection Act and the Code of Conduct for State Officials, support anti-corruption efforts.

2. National Plan for Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adoption of the National Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Combating Discrimination aims to address discrimination and promote equality. • Operational programs for national minorities include specific measures and activities to address their needs and enhance cultural inclusion.
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Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite progress, challenges persist in areas such as corruption perception, domestic violence, discrimination, and disparities faced by certain minority groups.
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SDG 17	PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development
1. Participation in Global Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia actively engages in global initiatives and collaborates with international bodies such as the European Commission, UN Habitat, and UNECE. The country's involvement in international working groups ensures global visibility and credibility in international development cooperation. • Croatia supports various projects in collaboration with international organizations. For instance, in partnership with UN WOMEN, it provides IT training for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Lebanese women. Financial contributions are made to initiatives like the World Food Programme's School Feeding Project in Syria.
2. Regional Cooperation in South East Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia contributes to the implementation of the SEE 2030 Strategy of the Regional Cooperation Council. It focuses on creating value chains, enhancing interregional investments in innovation, and strengthening strategic planning systems in South East European countries.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and initiatives for sustainable urban development, including challenges related to climate change, resilience, and inclusion still persists.
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