



World Report 2014 - European Union: Croatia

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Croatia joined the EU in July amid continuing human rights concerns. The EC called in March for improving the efficiency of the judiciary, domestic war crimes prosecution, and protection of minorities.

Domestic and international war crimes prosecution continued. In January, a local court ordered the state to compensate the children of Serb victims for the attack on Varivode during "Operation Storm" in 1995.

Voluntary returns to Croatia increased, with 358 returns in the first five months compared to 132 in all of 2012. Reintegration of members of the Serb minority remains problematic, with continued discrimination and hostility in some regions of the country and obstacles in relation to the right to housing. In November, the Vukovar city council halted the implementation of bilingualism after protests against Cyrillic street signs.

Roma, particularly stateless Roma, face difficulties accessing basic state services, including health care, social assistance, and education.

Few applied for asylum in Croatia – 928 people by mid-October – with Syrians forming the third largest national group, yet reception centers are overcrowded, and there were reports of some asylum seekers being placed in closed detention facilities. Protection for unaccompanied children remains problematic, with poorly trained guardians usually far from centers where children are placed, often in unsuitable accommodation.

Voting rights for people with mental or intellectual disabilities were restored in December 2012. Proposals to lift full legal guardianship from thousands of people would still allow courts to vastly restrict legal capacity. Implementation of a 2011 deinstitutionalization plan for those with mental or intellectual disabilities progressed slowly, with two projects targeting around 400 individuals launched in May, while almost 9,000 remain institutionalized.

Following a December 2012 Supreme Court ruling, Turkish journalist Vicdan Özerdem was released immediately from detention and returned to Germany where she has political asylum. Özerdem was detained in mid-2012 for extradition to Turkey where she is wanted on terrorism charges, sparking widespread international criticism.

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