

# TARGETED STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION 2021 RULE OF LAW REPORT

## UN HUMAN RIGHTS REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE (OHCHR)

This document presents the UN Human Rights Office's contribution to the targeted stakeholder consultation held by the European Commission in 2021 in the context of the second annual rule of law report.

It is a compilation of information related to Croatia, included in reports and documents of United Nations Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures and the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council, presented in a summarized manner. It also refers to statements and reports of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office. The cited material covers the period 2018-2020.

It mentions both positive developments and challenges to the rule of law in Croatia, as well as recommendations issued by the UN Mechanisms on how these challenges can be addressed and how the rule of law can be further strengthened.

In light of the methodology proposed by the European Commission the submission is divided in four pillars: national justice systems, anti-corruption frameworks, media pluralism and freedom and other institutional issues related to the checks and balances essential to an effective system of democratic governance.

## CROATIA REVIEW

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### Other institutional issues related to checks and balances

#### ➤ The enabling framework for civil society

In her February 2021 global update to the UN Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern about measures in several EU countries restricting the work of organizations that protect migrants' rights and deliver life-saving assistance. She noted that in Croatia, the authorities had sought to hinder public scrutiny of migration practices by denying access to the ombudswoman and human rights organisations, and discrediting their reports. At the end of January 2021, the Croatian authorities had blocked Members of the European Parliament from visiting border areas with Bosnia and Herzegovina, amid credible allegations of human rights violations. She emphasized that civil society and independent monitoring were fundamental to the health of all societies and encouraged the European Union and Member States to ensure that this trend of shrinking civic space be reversed, and to establish adequate protections, including through the EU Pact on Asylum and Migration

([www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26806&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26806&LangID=E) ).

In June 2020, several Special Procedures mandate-holders initiated a dialogue with Croatia expressing concern about new information they had received regarding alleged violent

pushback of migrants by the Croatian police to Bosnia and Herzegovina outside official procedures, and reports of a significant increase in the number of recorded cases of pushbacks by Croatian police in recent months. Such information came in addition to earlier information received on the same matter by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants during his official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2019. ([CRO 1/2020](#), available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TmSearch/Results>).