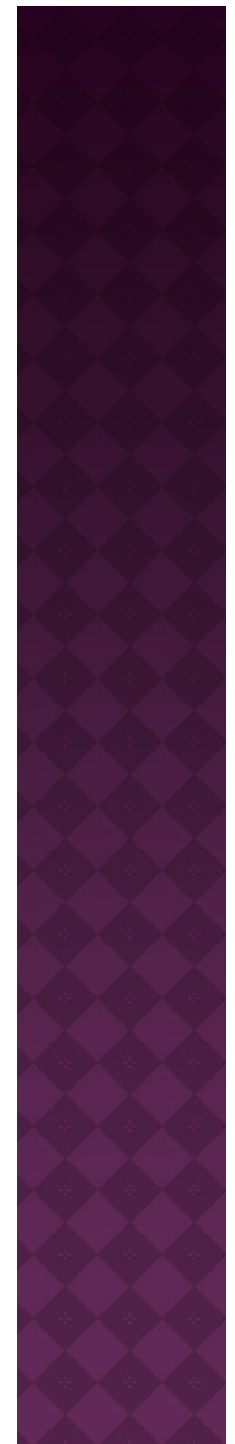


CROATIAN POLITICS, LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS FOR CROATIANS LIVING ABROAD

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INTRODUCTION

- ◉ About half of Croatian people live outside of the Republic of Croatia on all continents and countries.
- ◉ In the neighbouring countries we have Croatian minorities. In Bosnia and Herzegovina Croats are one of three constitutional nationalities.
- ◉ In the countries of the European Union a large number of Croats lives as Guest workers.



THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

- ◉ The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia reflects the needs of the Croats living abroad. It takes into account their different positions in the countries they live in, their differences and specific needs.
- ◉ The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia obliges Croatia to care for the Croatian nationals living abroad.
- ◉ **“The Republic of Croatia shall protect the rights and interests of its citizens living or residing abroad, and shall promote their links with the homeland.”**
- ◉ **“Parts of the Croatian nation in other states shall be guaranteed special concern and protection by the Republic of Croatia“.**

LAWS

The Constitutional obligation to care for the Croats living abroad is translated in several laws with the aim to:

- ◉ Promote links of the Croatian emigrants with mother country
- ◉ Facilitate their integration in the host countries
- ◉ Preserve their national identity
- ◉ Facilitate the return and integration of Croatian nationals who decide to turn to Croatia or to immigrate
(the descents of the third and fourth generation born abroad).

- ◉ The constant care for the Croatians living abroad is guaranteed by following laws:

The Law on Croatian Citizenship.

This law allows the Croatian citizenship even for the fourth generation Croatian expatriates to get citizenship without losing the Foreign citizenship. In accordance with the Constitution, Article 61 „The family shall enjoy special protection of the State“. The Law on Croatian Citizenship gives right to Croatian citizenship to the spouse and descendants of Croatian migrants no matter of their race, religion, gender of other differences. They don't have to renounce their foreign citizenship.

THE LAW ON CROATIAN CITIZENSHIP

Article 2

- ◉ The citizen of the Republic of Croatia who is at the same time foreign citizen, shall be, before the authorities of the Republic of Croatia, deemed to be exclusively a Croatian citizen.

II - ACQUIRING CITIZENSHIP

Article 3

- ◉ Croatian citizenship shall be acquired:
 1. by origin;
 2. by birth on the territory of the Republic of Croatia;
 3. by naturalization;
 4. according to international treaties.

Article 4

A child shall acquire Croatian citizenship by origin if:

1. both of his or her parents were, at the time of his or her birth, Croatian citizens;
 2. one of his or her parents was, at the time of his or her birth, a Croatian citizen, and the child was born in the Republic of Croatia;
 3. one of his or her parents was, at the time of his or her birth, a Croatian citizen, while the other was a stateless person or a person whose citizenship was unknown, and the child was born abroad.
- ◉ The child who is a foreign citizen or is a stateless person, shall acquire Croatian citizenship by origin, if, according to the provisions of a special Law, he or she was adopted with kinship legal effect by Croatian citizens. Such a child shall be deemed to be a Croatian citizen from the moment of his or her birth.

Article 5

- ◉ A child, born abroad whose one parent was, at the time of his or her birth, a Croatian citizen shall acquire Croatian citizenship by origin if he or she is, by the age of eighteen, signed up for registration as Croatian citizen by the authorized body of the Republic of Croatia abroad or in the Republic of Croatia or if he or she establishes residence in the Republic of Croatia.
- ◉ A child, born abroad, whose one parent was, at the time of his or her birth a Croatian citizen, but he or she does not meet one of the prerequisites from Paragraph 1 of this Article, shall acquire Croatian citizenship if he or she would otherwise be left stateless.
- ◉ A child, who shall acquire Croatian citizenship according to Paragraph 1 or 2 of this Article is deemed to be a Croatian citizen from the moment of his or her birth.

Article 10

- The foreigner who is married to a Croatian citizen and to whom permanent residency on the territory of the Republic of Croatia had been approved, can acquire Croatian citizenship by naturalization although he or she does not meet the prerequisites from Article 8, paragraph 1, points 1-4 of this Law.

Article 11

- ◉ An emigrant, as well as his or her descendants can acquire Croatian citizenship by naturalization although they do not meet the prerequisites from Article 8, paragraph 1, points 1-4 of this Law.
- ◉ The foreign citizen who is married to an emigrant who has acquired Croatian citizenship according to the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article can acquire Croatian citizenship although he or she does not meet the prerequisites from Article 8, paragraph 1, points 1-4 of this Law.
- ◉ According to paragraph 1 of this Article, an emigrant is a person who has emigrated from Croatia with the intention to live permanently abroad.

Article 12

- ◉ A foreign citizen whose admission to Croatian citizenship would be of interest for the Republic of Croatia, can acquire Croatian citizenship by naturalization although he or she does not meet the prerequisites from Article 8, paragraph 1, points 1-4 of this Law.
- ◉ Croatian citizenship can be acquired by the spouse of the person from paragraph 1 of this Article who has acquired Croatian citizenship although he or she does not meet the prerequisites from Article 8, paragraph 1, point 1-4 of this Law.
- ◉ The authorized Ministry shall issue an opinion on the existence of an interest in the admission to Croatian citizenship of a foreigner from paragraph 1 of this Article.

Article 13

A minor shall acquire Croatian citizenship by naturalization:

1. if both parents acquire citizenship by naturalization, or,
2. if only one parents acquires citizenship by naturalization, and the child lives in the Republic of Croatia:
3. if only parent acquires citizenship by naturalization, the other one is a stateless person or a person of unknown citizenship and the child is living abroad.

- ◉ According to the provision of Paragraph 1 of this Article, a minor of a person from Article 9. of this Law shall acquire citizenship by naturalization.

Article 16

- ◉ A member of the Croatian people who does not have a place of residence in the Republic of Croatia can acquire Croatian citizenship if he or she meets the prerequisites from Article 8, paragraph 1, section 5 of this Law and if he or she issues a written statement that he or she considers himself or herself to be a Croatian citizen.
- ◉ The statement of Paragraph 1 of this Article shall be given before the competent authority or before the diplomatic or consular office of the Republic of Croatia abroad.

- ◉ The Electoral system as it is now the **Law on elections** provides opportunity to all Croatian nationals who have Croatian citizenship to participate in the elections for the Parliament and for the President of the State.
- ◉ The Country is divided in 10 electorates. Each of them elects 12 members of the Parliament. National minorities elect 7 MPs and 11th electorate is made by the Croatian citizenship who have their residence outside of Croatia. They have possibility to elect up to 12 MPs. The number of MPs elected by the Croatian expatriates depends on the number of voters.

We have 5 MPs elected by the Croatian citizens living abroad.

The Law of recognition of foreign diplomas facilitates integration of the Croatians returning or migrating to Croatia from different countries or just wishing to take part in some scientific projects and investigations.

The Customs law gives privileges to the Croatian nationals who wish to return to Croatia. They are allowed to import free of charge vehicles, machinery and other articles which they need for living and working in Croatia.

The Law on foreigners does not obliged the Croatian nationals nor matter of their citizenship.

They have right to stay and work in Croatia as long as they wish and work without work permit.

Through different **international agreements** signed by the Croatian Parliament the Croatian nationals returning to Croatia have social security

All Croatian citizens who wish to study in Croatia have the same opportunities as the Croatian citizens with the residence in Croatia.

INSTITUTIONS

The Implementation of these and other laws concerning Croatians living abroad is done through several institutions

- ◉ **Ministry of Culture** provides financial and cultural support for various projects and activities of the Croatians living abroad.
- ◉ **The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport** finances the language, history and culture education for the children of the Croatian working in the European countries. The same ministry finances the schools, hospitals and university of the Croatians living in Bosnia and Herzegovina which is also a help to neighbor country.

The Ministry each year provides scholarship for the Croatian students who come to Croatia to study language or to continue to study for a university degree. They are provided with an amount of money, accommodation and chip meals.

- ◉ **The Ministry of family, veteran's affairs and intergenerational solidarity** as well as the Ministry of Social Security cares for war veterans and their families.
- ◉ **The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration** through embassies and consulates cares also for the Croatians living abroad. In the Ministry has been established the **Service for Croatians living abroad**.

One of the Institution with long experience is the **Croatian Heritage Foundation** which has its branches in Croatia and all over the World.

The Croatian Heritage Foundation has been publishing the MATICA monthly magazine for 55 years now, making it one of the oldest publications of its kind in Croatia.

It is presently printed on from 76 to 80 pages in 3000 copies. Besides its 2500 subscribers Matica it is dispatched to Croatian embassies, Croatian clubs, associations and the other places our communities across the globe gather.

In fulfilling its mission, the Croatian Heritage Foundation endeavors to develop a permanent dialogue with the Croatian emigrant communities with the aim of seeing an effective transfer of information from the social, cultural and economic scene in Croatia.

In response to frequent queries and requests for information from the Croatian emigrant communities, an **Information Department For Emigrant Croatians** is being created at the Croatian Heritage Foundation, which will provide information from the various areas that are of interest to Croatians and people of Croatian descent living outside Croatia.

The Information Department For Emigrant Croatians will establish more direct and better ties with the relevant and competent bodies of the administration in order to provide satisfactory resolutions to the requests of emigrant Croatians.

Information will be provided to emigrant Croatians especially in the following areas:

- ◉ Return of Emigrant Croatians to Croatia
- ◉ The Tax System & Tax policy
- ◉ The Internal Affairs
- ◉ The Economy, Labor & Business
- ◉ Tourism & Development of Transport Infrastructure
- ◉ Agriculture, Forestry & Water Management
- ◉ Healthcare & Social Security
- ◉ Zoning & Construction
- ◉ Science, Education & Sport
- ◉ Culture
- ◉ Other issues of importance to the Emigrant Communities.

The National Foundation for Science, technological development and school system is very successful in attracting Croatian scientists working in foreign scientific institutions. Many of them come to work with other scientists in Croatia on different scientific projects and with other who remains in foreign institution, Croatian scientists who live in Croatian institutions have an excellent cooperation useful for all countries.

- ◉ The parliamentary **Committee for the Croats living abroad**

This recently established Committee should discuss all draft laws, propose amendments necessary to facilitate return and integration of the Croats émigrés in the home country monitor the implementation of concerning laws and care for the Croatian minorities in the neighbor countries.

- ◉ The Committee cooperates with the ministries and other institutions in order to get better information of the need to amend certain laws which influence the Croats living abroad and the political, economic and other interests of the Republic of Croatia.
- ◉ The Committee has a good cooperation with the **Croatian Chamber of Commerce** which
- ◉ last year organized a International Conference under title „ **The Immigration policy in the function of economic development of the Republic of Croatia.**“

Other major institutions in Croatia and around the world

- ◉ Diplomatic Missions and Consular Offices in Croatia
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- ◉ Croatian World Congress
- ◉ Croatian Ethnic Institute
- ◉ United Croats of the World
- ◉ Matrix Croatica
- ◉ Canadian-Croatian Chamber of Commerce
- ◉ Center for Croatian Studies Abroad etc.

- ◉ **Croatian Universities** have different project for the Croatians living abroad.
- ◉ (e.g. **Faculty of electronics and computing**, University of Zagreb, has a projects: E-learning as a help in learning Croatian language)
- ◉ **Croatian Radio & Television** provides Radio & TV programs for the Croatians living abroad via Internet and Satellite.

CONCLUSION

- ◉ The relation between Republic of Croatia and Croatian living abroad is not characterized only by a kind of platonic love.
- ◉ It is a relation in which both sides get different benefits.
- ◉ Croatia helps its Nationals abroad to keep their national identity and to be at the same time loyal citizens of the host countries.
- ◉ Croatians living abroad contribute to Croatia a significant amount of money and other material contributions. They are lobbying for Croatia in the host countries and those who return to Croatia bring with them not only what they gained working in foreign countries but also their knowledge, work experience, children, parts of foreign culture and attitudes which are helping to produce a beneficial change of some elements of Croatian heritage hindering the development in the new situation.
- ◉ For many Croatians who got higher degrees of Education abroad as well as for older people who return to homeland with foreign pensions, live in Croatia is better (less stress at work, social security, climate etc.)