

COMPENDIUM SHORT PROFILE: CROATIA

(based on the detailed country profile of Jaka Primorac in cooperation with Nada Svob-Dokic and Nina Obuljen:
www.culturalpolicies.net/web/croatia.php)

1. Facts and figures

Political system:	Parliamentary democracy
Year of membership to the Council of Europe:	6 November 1996
Year of membership to UNESCO:	1 June 1992
Population:	4 190 669 (2016)
Non-nationals of total population:	7.5% (2015)
Official language(s):	Croatian (Minority languages: Czech, German, Hungarian, Italian, Serbian, Slovenian and Ukrainian)
Share of population using the Internet	70.3% (2016)
Public cultural expenditures per capita:	67.66 EUR (2014)
GDP in Billion EUR:	43.7 (2015)
Accession to Key Cultural Conventions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>European Cultural Convention</i> (1955): 27 January 1993 • <i>European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages</i> (1992): 1 March 1998 • <i>UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions</i> (2005): 31 August 2006. 	

2. Historical Perspective of Cultural Policy and recent Changes

In the 1990s, the cultural policy of independent Croatia was politically and administratively centralised and incorporated in everyday life with special emphasis on national traditions. It was designed to foster a sense of national cohesion, especially at the beginning of the period when the country was drawn into war. In the formal sense, the policy was formulated in general terms, emphasising market approach, freedom of creativity and professionalism. Cultural planning and funding gave priority to activities of "national interest" in culture and left all other activities to the emerging market and to NGOs.

Since 2000, the broader orientation of cultural policies changed according to the results of elections and priorities of new coalition governments: For example, pluralist cultural orientations with a focus on the development of cultural creativity and a more balanced approach to tradition, together with steps towards further decentralisation and direct co-operation with NGOs, have been replaced by plans aiming at a more 'homogeneous national culture' and cultural heritage as well as a stronger media control. The cultural community participated very actively in public debates, including with protests against new policies or ministerial appointments.

The period 2005-2013 has also been marked by the negotiations for Croatia's full membership of the European Union, which gave a new impetus to developments in all sectors. Croatia became a full member of the EU on 1 July 2013.

3. Overall description of the system

General context

The general objectives of cultural policy in Croatia over the last two decades included the pursuance of values such as: cultural pluralism (aesthetic and multi-ethnic), creative autonomy, the increase and diversification of sources for financing culture, polycentric cultural development, encouraging cultural participation and co-operation between the public and the private sector to increase efficiency, quality, employment and innovation. The most ambitious goal is bringing culture into the focus of interest of all inhabitants of the country.

Decentralisation is still an important subject of debate in Croatian cultural policy and practice, and has been highlighted in the Programme of the former government. However, no significant changes regarding decentralisation have been made during former or current governments. This process was further slowed down due to the lowering of income tax in 2015 which is primary source of income for local government that further influenced the decrease of funding for local government.

Division of tasks & main national actors in cultural policy

Decision-making and the implementation of cultural policy involve procedures and interactions between the Ministry of Culture, the government and the Parliament, on the one hand, and consultative cultural councils, local government and self-government, cultural institutions, NGOs, and individual artists and their associations, on the other.

The Ministry of Culture drafts laws and other important documents which the government passes on to the Parliamentary Committee for Education, Science and Culture, and/or Parliamentary Committee for Information, Informatisation and Media. When cleared, they undergo parliamentary discussion and enactment. The Ministry of Culture plays a part in drafting the budget and decides on the allocation of budgetary funds to various cultural fields, and it has responsibility for media policy issues.

In the last decade the major change in the cultural policy system was the adoption of the Law on Cultural Councils (2001) and its subsequent changes (2004, 2009 and 2013). Cultural Councils were first introduced in 2001 as semi-arm's length bodies, independent in making decisions about the distribution of funds: however, the Ministry of Culture managed and distributed subsidies. With the 2004 legislative changes, Cultural Councils became consultative bodies to the Minister of Culture with reduced autonomy but a similar mandate: e.g. proposing goals for cultural policy and measures for achieving them, offering professional assistance to the Minister of Culture, working out a long-term national cultural programme, and giving opinions on the distribution of grants.

Financing of culture

- Since 2009 there is a continuous decrease in state budget for culture and in 2014 the total budget for culture dropped to 0.49% of the total state budget, which is the lowest point since the nineties. There is a noticeable trend of regional governments increasing their part of total government spending on culture while the municipal part is decreasing.
- **Public culture expenditure**, at all levels of government, per capita in 2014 was **518.29 HRK (67.66 EUR)** which corresponds to **0.68% of GDP**. The share of cultural expenditure of the total government expenditure in 2014 was 1.31 %.
- From 2008-2011 sponsorship and grants to culture were considerably reduced, and this trend continued in the following years.

Public culture expenditure at all levels of government per capita, in EUR, 2009-2014

	2009	2011	2012	2013	2014
Croatia	77	72	68	67	67.6

Public cultural expenditure by level of government, in %, 1999-2000 and 2009-2014

Year	1999	2000	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Ministry of Culture	38	43	42	43	41	37	38	35
Towns	30	27	25	28	29	32	32	34
City of Zagreb	24	22	26	22	23	22	22	23
Counties	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Municipalities	3	3	3	3	3	5	4	4
Total	100							

Source: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia.

4. Main cultural policies and priorities

General context

The most important priorities of the cultural policy, introduced at the beginning of 2000 were, among others: building up the functions, work methods and public respect for the new Culture Councils; creating mixed funds for cultural investment; renewing and readapting the cultural infrastructure; finalising a complete registry of cultural monuments; and furthering the use of information technology in culture.

Cultural policy priorities are detailed and shifted according to the proclaimed objectives and priorities of different governments. Those proclaimed by the former government (2011-2015) followed the main framework of the Strategy of Cultural Development that was adopted by the Parliament in 2002, but never put into action. The new government has not yet presented its' cultural strategy.

Latest developments:

- The foundation Croatia House which supported projects promoting Croatian culture abroad was closed in 2016.
- Cultural priorities for 2016 were listed as protection of national cultural identity, safeguarding traditional culture, connecting culture with other sectors, highlighting the importance of local cultural production and an aim to strengthen the cultural budget to 1% in the next four year period.
- The number employed in arts, entertainment and recreation activities declined in 2014 and 2015 according to the Central Bureau of Statistics
- The budget of the Ministry of Culture for 2016 drastically cut funding for social security and health benefits in the cultural sector.
- There has been criticism of over-commercialisation of the museum sector following changes brought about by the special law regarding museums and collections adopted in 2015



- Expenditure of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports in the City of Zagreb has been dropping in recent years, while for the cities of Spilt and Rijeka the budget has been increasing
- The number of professional theatres continues to increase each year for many years, while the number of cinema screens has also been rising since 2011, following a dramatic fall in 2010.
- There was also a dramatic rise in the number of professional orchestras, ensembles and choirs in 2013/2014 after stagnation in the previous decade
- There is controversy over government plans to implement the new Strategy for Education, Science and Technology (2015), which includes changes to arts education.

5. International cooperation

General context and main actors

International cultural co-operation has been continuously listed among cultural and cultural development priorities in Croatia.

The government established the Cultural Council for International Relations and European Integration following the provisions of the changed Law on Cultural Councils in 2004, while in 2013 this Council changed its name to the Council for International Cultural Cooperation. The aim of this Council is to better coordinate and plan international cultural cooperation activities. In addition to its consultative role in the distribution of grants, the Cultural Council for International Relations also has the task to suggest improvements in the coordination of planning and participation in international exchanges.

The government continues signing bilateral agreements and programmes of cultural cooperation; so far 48 bilateral agreements and 25 bilateral programmes have been signed. It is important to stress that the majority of projects financially supported by the Ministry of Culture are not based on the traditional form of "government to government cooperation" but on direct contacts between artists and arts and cultural organisations.

The Ministry of Culture (on the national level) and larger cities (on the local level) are major founders of international cultural cooperation projects and initiatives. The Ministry of Culture cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs which is responsible for coordination of work of cultural attachés. Croatian embassies are still the focal points for the promotion of Croatian culture.

The Ministry of Culture operates all major instruments used in international cultural relations including state guarantees, bilateral agreements and programmes, as well as sector-specific agreements such as co-production agreements. The Directorate for International Cultural Relations, European Affairs and Public Communication of the Ministry of Culture has two Sectors – International Cultural Relations and European Affairs and the Sector for EU Programmes and Projects.



European cooperation

Since its independence, Croatia has been a member of the Council of Europe, and participated in its numerous activities and projects. The same can be said for EU programmes after the country became a full member in July 2013.

Strengthening cultural cooperation with other countries of the European Union is one of the priorities of international cultural cooperation. Such cooperation is based on existing links between artists and art managers; bilateral and regional programmes of cooperation; cooperation within the framework of international organisations such as UNESCO or the Council of Europe; cooperation within regional organisations such as the Council of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe (the Charter, signed in Copenhagen on 31 March 2005), the network of ministers responsible for cultural heritage sponsored by UNESCO, the Danubian Region, the Alps Adriatic Working Community, the Central European Initiative, the Quadrilateral Initiative, Adrian-Ionian Initiative, etc. The projects include post-war reconstruction, the return of stolen cultural assets, support for mobility, and cooperation in the field of policy-making, cultural itineraries, networking among youth, etc.