



2020 REPORT BY THE CROATIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

*Croatian
Bar
Association*

On 15 January 2021, 4,838 lawyers were registered in the List of Lawyers of the Croatian Bar Association, 9 foreign lawyers were registered in the List of Foreign Lawyers of the Croatian Bar Association, whereas 4 lawyers (from Germany, Italy, Spain and Slovenia) were registered under the provisions of Directive 98/5/EU and the relevant provisions of the Croatian Legal Profession Act in the List of Lawyers of the Croatian Bar Association allowed to practice under the professional title of the host country, i.e. under the professional title "odvjetnik". In addition, 1,449 trainee lawyers were registered in the List of Trainee Lawyers of the Croatian Bar Association.

The year 2020 was marked by the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. However, Croatia was unfortunately hit by two catastrophes in the course of last year, namely the March 22 earthquake, hitting the city of Zagreb, and the December 29 earthquake hitting the cities of Sisak, Petrinja and Glin.

It is quite clear that the coronavirus pandemic and the two catastrophic earthquakes significantly affected the performance of lawyers.

The Croatian Bar Association reacted immediately to all the above mentioned events trying to alleviate the consequences of those events helping lawyers in their practice.

Immediately in March 2020, upon the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the CBA proposed to the Croatian Ministry of Justice a Draft Law on Intervention Measures that concerned the performance of courts, the provisions on the course of the statute of limitations, and procedural and substantive-law related periods for taking actions in court proceedings, on holding online judicial proceedings, on prisoners' rights, etc.

The Croatian Bar Association exempted lawyers from paying their membership fees seeking the Croatian authorities to suspend the collection of taxes for lawyers, and that lawyers be entitled, like any and all other employees, to the support from the state budget aimed to those suffering from a major reduction in the amount of work performed.

The March 22, 2020 earthquake made it impossible for many lawyers with law firms in the city center of Zagreb to work because their offices were significantly damaged or even completely destroyed. The Bar provided the competent authorities with a list of lawyers whose law offices were destroyed in an effort to have their damages granted in full and offered any other help and assistance sought by those aggrieved lawyers.

The CBA did the same in the case of the earthquake of December 29, 2020 that hit the cities of Sisak, Petrinja and Glina, affecting 37 lawyers whose law offices were entirely destroyed, where it was necessary to ensure working conditions to those lawyers as quickly as possible.

The CBA procured housing-containers for the work of those lawyers, provided telephone and Internet connections, computers, etc. so that, despite the rather modest conditions, they could resume with their work. In addition, the CBA made it possible for those lawyers to use the premises of the Sisak Local Bar that were not damaged in the earthquake.

Although last year was undoubtedly a difficult one, the CBA focused a good part of its work on legislative activities related to the Act on Amendments to the Civil Procedure Code, the Act on Amendments to the Enforcement Act, and the adoption of adequate regulations on electronic communication with courts, while being primarily concerned with the amendments to the Legal Profession Act.

As a petitioner, the CBA worked intensively with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia on the amendments to the Legal Profession Act, which is in parliamentary procedure. Namely, the first reading of the proposed amendments to the Legal Profession Act was held in the Croatian Parliament as early as June 2020 and, after the discussion, there were no serious objections to the proposed amendments. The second reading of the Act was expected in Parliament, but it did not take place since parliamentary elections were called.

The newly elected Parliament and the Government of the Republic of Croatia returned the entire procedure of adoption of the amendments to the Legal Profession Act to the beginning and it was expected that the Act would be adopted by Parliament by the end of 2020. The amendments to the Legal Profession Act are expected to be adopted in the first quarter of this year.

The CBA held its regular annual general meeting in July 2020.

As regards other activities in which the CBA was involved, it can be pointed out that the representatives of the CBA participated in the Bar Leaders' Meeting of Central and Eastern Europe that concerned digitalization and that they participated in the Bar Leader's Round Table organized by the German Federal Bar. In addition, the CBA marked the European Lawyers' Day and supported the Resolution on the Rule of Law adopted at the Vienna Presidential Conference on 21 February 2020, etc.

A major portion of time was dedicated to the development of the IT solution for the performance of the CBA, the digital lifelong learning system development for lawyers and trainee lawyers, the regular meetings of the CBA Executive Board and Management Board - also held in digital form, as well as the cooperation with various other institutions. For instance, with the Ombudsman for Children an agreement was reached on the free representation by lawyers in cases concerning the rights of the child, primarily for alimony purposes, and a cooperation with the Ombudsman for Children was obtained in the area of providing special professional training for lawyers representing children in judicial proceedings, etc.

Finally, it can be concluded that the year 2020 was a most challenging year for all Croatian lawyers, and for those in Zagreb, Sisak, Petrinja and Glin it was a tragic one.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Josip Šurjak', written in a cursive style.

Josip Šurjak, President
Croatian Bar Association

