

The 54th European Conference of Presidents of Bar Associations and Law Societies

Annual Country Report of the Croatian Bar Association

Introduction

The Annual Country Report of the Croatian Bar Association (hereinafter: "CBA") for 2025, presents an overview of the main activities and challenges that have influenced the functioning of the legal profession in the Republic of Croatia. The report also includes statistics on the number of lawyers and trainee lawyer, registered in the relevant directories of the CBA.

1) Decision of the High Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia on the legality of the Lawyers' Tariff

The High Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia refused the requests for a review of legality of the Tariff No. 27, item 1, subparagraph 2; Tariff No. 27 item 2; and Tariff No. 52, paragraph 3, of the Tariff of Fees and Expenses payable for Lawyers' Services (Official Gazette, No. 138/23). Regarding the review of legality of Tariff No. 27, item 1, subparagraph 2 and Tariff No. 27 item 2, the High Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia found that the prescribed number of points under the Tariff No. 27, item 1, subparagraph 2 of the Lawyers' Tariff, particularly in light of the consent of the competent Minister, indicates that the proposed text of the Tariff and the amendments compared to the current Tariff (including the value of the point under Tariff No. 27) do not jeopardise social and economic interests, nor the equality between recipients and providers of legal services, accordingly they do not constitute an excessive burden on the parties.

The High Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia found that Tariff No. 27, item 1, subparagraph 2, Tariff No. 27 item 2 do not jeopardise the social and economic interests. This is particularly the case because the CBA in accordance with the provision of Article 21 of the Legal Profession Act and Chapter III of the Lawyers' Code of Conduct provides free legal aid to deprived persons and victims of the Homeland War in legal matters in which these persons exercise rights related to their status as socially deprived persons.

Regarding the review of legality of Tariff No. 52 paragraph 3 of the Lawyers' Tariff the High Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia is of the view that the provision is of a transitional nature, meaning that it cannot, in itself, have a retroactive effect prohibited by

Article 90 (4) of the Constitution. Moreover, the provision is directed to the court or other authority deciding on representation costs; prior to such a decision, no party has acquired any rights or had any obligations imposed.

2) Activities of the CBA related to the Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer

The Republic of Croatia in accordance with the Government Decision of 4 September 2025, accepted the text of the Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer and the Minister of Justice, Administration and Digital transformation signed the Convention on behalf of the Republic of Croatia on 14 October 2025.

The Republic of Croatia actively participated in drafting the text of the Convention through the work of the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ). In accordance with the proposals of the CBA the Republic of Croatia supported the initiative of the Council of Europe for the adoption of the Convention, which aims to ensure that lawyers can practice their profession freely, without fear of physical attacks, threats, harassment, intimidation or inappropriate interference.

3) Act Amending and Supplementing the Legal Profession Act

Compliance of national legislation with the provisions of the Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer has been achieved through the Act Amending and Supplementing the Legal Profession Act (Official Gazette, No. 98/2025). The amendments strengthened procedural safeguards and the rights of lawyers and enhanced the role of the Croatian Bar Association in protecting the professional rights and independence of lawyers. During the legislative process, the Croatian Bar Association was actively involved in matters related to the Convention, thereby contributing to the promotion of standards aimed at safeguarding the independence of the legal profession and its role in upholding the rule of law.

In addition to harmonizing national legislation with the Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer, the aforementioned Act harmonised the status of lawyers from states acceding to the OECD Code of Liberalisation of Capital Movements and the OECD Code of Liberalisation of Current Invisible Operations, with status of lawyers from Member States of the European Union.

4) Project "Paperless Commercial Courts in the Republic of Croatia"

Recognising the exceptional importance of activities aimed at the digitalisation of the judiciary, the Croatian Bar Association has provided continuous support to the "Paperless Commercial Courts in the Republic of Croatia" project (hereinafter: the "Project") from its outset, notably through the regular participation of its representatives in meetings and conferences organised within the framework of the Project. The Project was implemented over a period of 18 months and aimed to support the competent Croatian authorities, in particular the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation and the commercial courts, in the transition

towards fully paperless business processes in commercial courts, which are intended to be the first courts within the judicial system to introduce this concept.

At the Final Conference of the Project, held on 16 January 2026, Ms Hanne Juncher, Director of the Directorate of Security, Integrity and Rule of Law of the Council of Europe, stated in her opening address: "This joint European Union and Council of Europe project represents a key step forward in the digitalisation of commercial courts in Croatia, while at the same time preserving the independence of the judiciary and ensuring that technological progress is aligned with the requirements of human rights and the rule of law." At the Final Conference, the judge of the Commercial Court in Zagreb expressed special appreciation and thanks to the Croatian Bar Association for its cooperation and support, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the CBA and each individual lawyer demonstrated readiness to cooperate and participate in online hearing, thereby contributing to the continued, albeit partial, functioning of judicial proceedings. The panellists emphasised that the digitalisation of case files represents a new industrial revolution for the judicial system, that the Project has laid the foundations for the digital transformation of the judiciary, and expressed the expectation that it has established a solid basis facilitating the practical implementation phase that now follows.

5) Court Decisions Search Engine of the Republic of Croatia and the ANON System

The new search engine for decisions of the courts of the Republic of Croatia within the ANON system represents a significant contribution to the legal profession, as well as to the improvement and transparency of the judicial system, indirectly benefiting all citizens of the Republic of Croatia.

As of 1 January 2025, the court decisions search engine portal has been available in the Republic of Croatia, enabling advanced searches of anonymised court decisions concluding judicial proceedings, in full compliance with personal data protection rules. The tool for the public announcement and search of court decisions was developed within the framework of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021–2026. Given that decisions of all courts are already in the eSpis system, the ANON system is designed to be interconnected with eSpis in order to retrieve data and perform anonymisation for the purpose of publication on a dedicated public portal. For the practical implementation of this solution, adjustments to the legislative framework were required. Accordingly, the Act on Amendments to the Courts Act (Official Gazette, No. 36/24) introduced the obligation to publish anonymised court decisions as of 1 January 2025 and defined the scope and manner of such public announcement. Based on these amendments, the Ordinance on the Method of Anonymisation, Publication and Search of Anonymised Court Decisions (Official Gazette, No. 134/2024) was adopted and entered into force on 1 January 2025. The Ordinance lays down detailed rules governing the anonymisation, publication and search of anonymised court decisions concluding judicial proceedings and published on a dedicated website.

The development of the ANON system addressed the issue of limited publication of court decisions by establishing a comprehensive system for the publication of all court decisions, preceded by automated anonymisation using dedicated software, and their publication on a unified publicly accessible portal with advanced search functionalities, in compliance with personal data protection requirements. The publicly available search engine forms part of an

IT solution for the anonymisation and publication of court decisions based on artificial intelligence technology used specifically for the anonymisation of court decisions.

6) Statistics on the number of lawyers and trainees in the Republic of Croatia

As of 31 December 2025, there were 5,452 lawyers registered in the CBA Lawyers' Register and 1,191 trainee lawyers were registered in the CBA Trainee Lawyers' Register. These figures indicate an increase in the number of lawyers in the Republic of Croatia, accompanied by a slight decrease in the number of trainee lawyers. As of the same date, there were 16 lawyers from other European Union Member States registered in the Register of Foreign Lawyers entitled to practise in the Republic of Croatia under their home-country professional title.

Zagreb, January 2026

President
Iva Marković Bagarić

