

LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN CROATIA

GENERAL INFORMATION

The right to local and regional government is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and is reflected primarily in the right to perform independently tasks of local importance; to organize independently the structure of local government units and define the scope of authorities of their administrative bodies; to elect directly mayors and members of representative bodies of local government units; to possess own income and manage them independently.

Croatian local government system is based on the principle of **autonomy of power** (exclusive right of a local government unit to manage its tasks independently based on the regulations it adopts) and the principle of **subsidiarity** (making and executing decisions is devolved to the level of the authority which is the closest to the citizens).

Croatian local government system is monotypic: all local governments, regardless of their size and other characteristics, perform basically the same scope of authorities. At the same time, the biggest local government is the City of Zagreb with almost 800,000 citizens and the smallest is the Municipality of Civljane with only 137 citizens.

Croatia is divided into 21 regional government units: 20 counties and the City of Zagreb which has both the status of the city and the county. Each county (apart from the City of Zagreb) consists of cities and municipalities. There are **126 cities and 429 municipalities** in total.

Among the cities, we distinguish the category of so called **large cities**, local government units with more than 35,000 citizens.

SCOPE OF AUTHORITIES

The administrative scope of authorities of municipalities, cities and counties is defined by **the method of general clause**. This means that municipalities and cities perform tasks of local importance, whereas counties perform tasks of regional importance which are not devolved

Via webpage of the Association of Municipalities (www.udruga-opcina.hr), you can access the electronic address book of local government, which contains information about all cities and municipalities in Croatia.



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to state administrative bodies by the Constitution or the law.

Among other, municipalities and cities perform tasks which refer to organization of settlement and housing; spatial and urban planning; communal services and order; child care; social welfare; primary health care; pre-school and primary school education; consumer protection; fire protection and civil defence; etc. Along these tasks, large cities and county seats perform tasks of maintenance of public roads; issuing construction and location permits and other acts related to construction and implementation of documents concerning spatial planning, as well as other tasks prescribed by the law.

Counties perform tasks which refer to education, health care, economic development, traffic and traffic infrastructure, maintenance of public roads, spatial and urban planning, etc.

BODIES

Each municipality, city and county has a representative body (municipality/city council or county assembly). Number of members in municipality and city councils differs based on the population in each local government.

The executive body is a municipality/city mayor and a county prefect.

Members of representative and executive bodies are elected directly to a four-year-term.

Municipalities, cities and counties have their administrative bodies: administrative departments and services. Local governments with population of less than 3,000 organize a single administrative department, whereas local governments with population of more than 3,000 establish specialized administrative departments.

FINANCING

Local and regional government is financed from their own sources (assets revenues, taxes, fines, administrative

fees, etc.), shared revenues, aids, financial assets revenues and loans.

City and municipality taxes are surtax on personal income tax; consumption tax; vacation home tax; tax on firm or name; and tax on the use of public surfaces.

County and City of Zagreb taxes are inheritance and gift tax, tax on motor vehicles, vessel tax and tax on entertainment machines-

Shared taxes are personal income tax (shared between county, city and municipality) and tax on real estate business (shared between state and local government).

NATIONAL MINORITIES

National minorities make 7.5% of population in Croatia. There are 22 national minorities and the most numerous are Serbian, Bosnian and Italian.

National minorities with 5-15% in total population of a city or municipality, have the right to one representative in the representative body. If they make more than 15% in total population, they have the right to proportional representation in the representative and executive body. Proportional representation in the representative and executive bodies in the counties and the City of Zagreb is secured if a national minority makes 5% or more in total population.

JOINING

Pursuant to the Law on Local and Regional Government, local and regional government units can establish their associations in order to promote and achieve their common interests.

There are several associations active in Croatia: the Association of Cities (www.udruga-gradova.hr), the Association of Municipalities (www.udruga-opcina.hr), the Union of Cities and Municipalities (www.savez-gradova-opcina-rh.hr) and Croatian County Association (www.hrvzz.hr).

