

MAY 2003 • VIDA KORÉN-HOLM, ANNA CRAENEN

Semi-annual report  
October 2002–March 2003

# Republic of Croatia



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Political Development

There seems to be widespread agreement within the ruling coalition and within the opposition that general elections will be held in mid-autumn 2003, i.e. a few months before the end of the current legislative period. The formation of the next government is unclear. Opinion polls put HDZ first, followed by Prime Minister Racan's SDP. No single party will achieve majority so there will most likely be a new coalition government. The general public is disappointed with the achievements of the current government. There are serious problems with regard to privatisation where members of the coalition have differing views on how to proceed. Suggested changes to the labour legislation during the past months have provoked several strikes. Unemployment is still high but there are indications that it might be decreasing slightly.

Croatia applied for EU-membership in February 2003, with the aim of becoming a full member on the union together with Bulgaria and Rumania in 2007. The country does not yet fulfil the political criteria set by the union, but some progress has been made. Cooperation with ICTY remains a concern. There are still problems with rule of law, refugee return and media legislation. Parliament adopted a long awaited constitutional law on national minorities in December 2002, which now needs to be implemented. Recently adopted changes to the election law provides for at least eight minority representatives in parliament. The government adopted a five-year plan for reform of the justice sector in November 2002. A new TV-law was adopted by parliament in February 2002.

Cooperation with neighbouring countries continues to improve, although outstanding issues remain. Croatia became full member of CEFTA on 1 March 2003.

Furthermore, in March 2003, the EU Commission has come up with the Second progress report on Croatia, generally positive but still reiterating earlier reprimands on the Government for its slow movement on reforms and low political will in regard to refugee return process.

## **1.2. Economic Development**

Croatian economy continues to develop positively with an estimated GDP growth of 4,2% in 2003. The growth is driven by domestic demand supported by an ambitious public infrastructure programme and favourable tourist situation.

In an environment of ongoing restructuring and growing labour force, unemployment remains high but there seem to be first signals of a gradual easing of the situation. The average unemployment rate reported in Labour Force Survey based on ILO standards is expected to go down to 14,5% in 2002.

The European Union continues to be Croatia's most important trade partner (Italy, Germany and Austria. Croatian main exports to EU are textiles and clothing and machinery products and main imports from EU include machinery, electrical and transport equipment.

Croatia has succeeded in maintaining access to international capital markets at favourable conditions.

## **1.3. Social Development**

According to OECD, Croatia already, along with Slovenia, ranks as the most expensive country among the transition economies. While four percent of the population is officially classed as living in the state of poverty, recent public survey showed that eighty percent of the population view themselves as living on the edge of poverty.

The situation for returnees and displaced persons remains difficult as the economic situation in the areas of return shows very low progress. Return process is being slowed down by an overall depressing situation with low investment tact and limited job opportunities.

# 2. Swedish Development Cooperation and Donor Coordination

## **2.1. Development Cooperation Strategy and the Development Cooperation Agreement with Croatia**

Current Sida development co-operation with Croatia is in line with the country strategy for Swedish development co-operation as decided by the Swedish Government in June 2001 and valid throughout 2003.

A final draft for the Development Cooperation Agreement with Croatia has been submitted to the Ministry of European Integration (in charge of development cooperation) and its final signing is to be expected within May 2003 according to the latest signals from MEI.

## **2.2. Disbursement and Planning**

Disbursement tempo follows the annual plan.

## **2.3. Donor Co-ordination**

The Ministry of European Integration (MEI) is the responsible line ministry for all development cooperation and coordination. All technical assistance to Croatia is displayed on Mei's web page ([www.mei.hr](http://www.mei.hr)), providing valuable information to the donor society.

The EU Delegation in Croatia organises monthly coordination meetings for Member States. At those meetings, Cards programmes are discussed along with actualities in the implementation of the SA agreement.

An additional donor co-ordination has newly been re-established for the donor society engaged within the field of civil society, human rights and democratisation.

# 3. Sida Programmes and Projects

## 3.1. Human rights and democratisation

### 3.1.1. *Swedish Helsinki Committee (SHK)*

SHK's implementing partners working with democratization, HR and minority rights are: SDF – Knin, HHO – Osijek and Vukovar, DOS – Split, HHO Media Ombudsman Zagreb, Center for Civil Initiatives Banovina and Pusa – Knin.

### 3.1.2. *Olof Palme International Center (OPIC)*

Six Croatian NGOs working with democratisation, conflict resolution and human rights are supported by OPIC. These NGOs are: Gender Task Force Center (Women can do it project), DIM – Zagreb (Youth in Politics), Centre for Peace – Baranja, GONG (First time voters), Autonomous Trade Union and ZAMIR (revitalization of war affected areas) OPIC's coordinator for Croatia programs has visited the Sida Zagreb office in January.

### 3.1.3. *Kvinna till kvinna (KtK)*

KtK is working with the shaping of opinion on women's rights, gender roles and equality between women and men. Twelve Croatian NGOs are working with KtK support: Women's club – D.Lapac, Korak – Karlovac, Women's center in Vukovar, Stope Nade – Benkovac, Women group – Brod, Center for Civil Initiative – Porec, Centre for Women Studies – Zagreb, Women's network – Porec, Babe – Zagreb (advocacy), CESI (Women summer school), Women's room – Zagreb (combating violence) and Roma women club – Zagreb. There is good cooperation with KtK's country coordinator in Zagreb.

### 3.1.4. *International Organization for Migration (IOM)*

Sida supports IOM Croatia via regional IOM project on Counter Trafficking for Western Balkans. In February, a nation wide campaign was launched in Croatia in order to raise public awareness about the problem.

### 3.1.5. *East West Institute (EWI)*

EWI Continues with its regional programme.



### 3.1.6. *Balkan Children and Youth Foundation (BCYF)*

Sida Zagreb met recently BCYF's Regional Programme Co-ordinator and its in-country co-ordinator and learned interesting things about BCYF's activities in Croatia.

## 3.2. Integrated Area Programmes, Return of Refugees

In general, the refugee return process has in 2002 slowed down. The situation for those who decided to return remains very difficult. Without support from the international community, the return frequency would have been much lower. After almost a decade, people have integrated into new communities.

Refugee return	1995–2003	2002	2003
Total no. returns	345,717	17,634	3,008
Total no. DP* returns	230,261	6,586	1,434
To Eastern Slavonia (DP)	82,756	4,613	1,889
To other parts of Croatia (DP)	147,505	1,973	245
Returns to Bosnia	8,202		
Internally DP in need of accommodation	16,237		
Refugees in need of accommodation	7,525		

### 3.2.1. *Lutheran World Federation (LWF)*

LWF continues to work as return facilitator in Lika region. This reporting period does not cover the most intensive time for reconstruction and farming activities. Winter and early spring instead gives time for planning and preparation for return that will accelerate in the summer. During the year 2002 totally 798 houses were reconstructed. The LWF reports that the support to sustainable return through to the revival of agriculture, cattle and sheep breeding was significant. Milk collectors, supplied by LWF, help the farmers to sell off the surplus of milk (2000 litres/day). At present approximately 250 returnee families earn their living based on initial LWF support. The Mad Cow Disease disrupted planned delivery of cows as the Government banned the import.

LWF continues to promote return of refugees by cross border activities in Vojvodina where thousands of refugees from Lika region reside. The organisation has a good cooperation with the local authorities, UNHCR and other organisations in the region in order to avoid overlapping.

Sida has paid several visits to the program. A Sida journalist and a photographer published an interesting article for *Omvärlden* 4–5/2002 describing the pale reality of a returnee fate. The article illustrates joy and happiness in being back as well as difficulties and shortcomings that bother people in Lika and prevent others from returning home.

## 3.3. Health, Culture and Gender

### 3.3.1. *PROMT*

Proni provides education for youth leaders and promotes reconciliation among youth in the war torn multiethnic Danube region through establishing youth clubs where youngsters meet and perform various activities.

During the reporting period Proni has expanded its activities to Lika and central Croatia, financially supported by the OSCE. As a part of a wider regional project supported by Sida, Proni has in cooperation with the State Institute for Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth drafted a National Youth Action Plan, which the Government submitted to the Parliament for adoption. Proni was offered to join the implementation of the Youth Action Plan.

An interesting evaluation of Proni projects was carried out during 2002. It will be followed up by an accounting revision carried out by an Ernst&Young reviser in April this year.

Proni's 2003 project application submitted to Sida in January, needed to be taken under special consideration in order to be able to come up with a proper decision.

#### *3.3.2. International Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture (IRCT)*

IRCT continues to carry out the project for trauma victims. According to the plan, a booklet about the project was published in March and presented the regional conference organized by IRCT.

#### *3.3.3. Society for Psychological Assistance (SPA)*

A first ever generation of Supervisor of Social Work was examined and ten professionals received Supervisor Diploma from the University of Stockholm, approved by European Supervisors Association. Newly examined supervisor continue to train a new group of supervisors according to the project plan. SPA asked for revision of the previously approved budget and received additional funding in order to carry out the final project year's activities.

#### *3.3.4. Royal University Music Collage*

The International music school project continues.

### **3.4. Institutional Capacity Building**

#### *3.4.1 Statistics*

The Croatian Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and its Swedish counterpart Statistiska Centralbyrån (SCB) are jointly developing a Croatian metadata base. A specific Project Agreement has been signed. The cooperation between the two partners develops smoothly and the project is in full progress, following the plan. Several study visits have been organised. Swedish consultants are regularly visiting their counterparts and briefing Sida's office in Zagreb. This first year's cooperation has disclosed a further need to work on the improvement of the general management of the office, IT management as well as strengthening the publishing services of the CBS. The budget for the second year has been revised and approved.

#### *3.4.2. Cadastre*

The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) at the State Geodetic Agency and Ministry of Justice has been established and the Sida supported training programme has started successfully in March. Swedesurvey has been selected to carry out the training to a total value of 4,9 million SEK. A training programme started with seven PIU members visiting

cadastre and land registry offices in Germany, Finland and Estonia. This training will provide PIU members with skills to carry out the big Land registry and Cadastre Reform financed by a loan from the World Bank. In September 2002 the World Bank approved a 26 million Euro loan to Croatia in order to modernize the country's land registry and cadastre. The Swedesurveys project plan was appreciated as it meets the preconditions for starting up of the very important reform for Croatia's future development.

#### *3.4.3. Adriatic Sea Partenariat*

The Croatian side considered that the project would be too expensive and there was neither enough interest from the government nor from other donors to carry out the project which was finally postponed until further.

#### *3.4.4. Training of Journalists*

The initial contacts on a joint project with the Croatian Association of Journalists are pending. The Association was due to submit their project idea on training of young journalist working throughout the country for local radio stations. The idea of Swedish support to establishing an institution of Pressombudsman, though, has partly been carried out through a project supported by SHK in cooperation with their Croatian counterpart, the Croatian Helsinki Committee.

#### *3.4.5. Public administration reform*

The public administration reform is among issues being frequently discussed and put on the agenda. However, the lack of knowledge, good practice and slow state bureaucracy are obstacles to its implementation. In regard of the reform, however, preliminary contacts have been established with the government. The issue will be discussed with the Swedish delegation visiting Zagreb in April.

#### *3.4.6. Agriculture*

A number of potential areas of cooperation in agricultural sector has been identified as the result from a visit to Croatia in 2002 by Sida (Consolidation of agricultural land). A follow up visit was carried out in March 2003 and resulted in a concrete proposal for Land Consolidation project with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. A study tour to Sweden (Kristianstadslän) is due to be carried out in June.

#### *3.4.7. Environment*

Sida's Regional Environment Coordinator visited Ministry of Environment in the view of a possible cooperation. The newly established Agency for Environment Protection showed that for time being they receive support through Cards programme and stated that their absorption capacity for further support is limited. However, they outlined the important issue of training for regional environmental inspectors that according to the ministry need to be strengthened in order to be able to meet national and international standards. In March an official from the ministry was selected to attend the Sida ITP on Environmental Impact Assessment Training, organised by Scandia consult.

#### *3.4.8. Public Procurement*

Our efforts, co-ordinated with the EU Delegation did not result in any progress. The Ministry of Finance neither responded in time nor met the EU Delegation's time plan for implementation of the Cards programme on Procurement. The EU Delegation has serious plans to withdraw the project and reallocate the funds (1 million Euro).

#### *3.4.9. Ministry of European Integration (MEI)*

The Ministry of European Integration is the engine behind the multifaceted reform and EU integration process in the country. MEI has identified areas of cooperation and submitted it to Sida for further consideration in respect to the new development co-operation strategy.

#### *3.4.10. NGO Office*

The Governmental Office for NGOs is being reorganised and will according to the new Law on Foundations be transformed into the Public Foundation receiving funds from the State Lottery. The Office expressed several times that they would like to learn more about Swedish experiences, especially about the cooperation between the state and NGOs in the social sector. The office is due to prepare a request for cooperation with Sida.

#### *3.4.11. Center for Social Policy Initiatives (CSPI)*

The co-operation with CSPI resulted in a study trip to Sweden whereby the Swedish model of Foster Care has been studied in-depth. This NGO has many years of experience of working with children's rights. Currently they are engaged in the de-institutionalisation of childcare. The general reform of Social Welfare foresees foster care being an alternative to institutional care. CSPI has submitted a three-year project proposal to Sida in order to carry out foster care reform supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

### **3.5. Various**

During the reporting period following visits were paid to Sida Zagreb Office:

- Desk Officer for Croatia
- The Sida East Information officer and consultant – Information policy training
- Sida's Natur Senior Officer and consultant- Agriculture and Land consolidation
- UD inspection
- PIU – Sida Consultant Cadastre
- ILAC – assessment team
- AMS team – concerning Cards Labour market reform
- Proni Director, Jonkoping

# 4. Conclusions

As previously reported, there are many players in the field of institutional capacity building in Croatia. Since Croatia signed the SA agreement and submitted its EU application, it is even more sophisticated and more difficult to find a suitable development-cooperation niche correlating the user's needs, donor's skills and also taking into consideration other actions already taken. Thus, the coordination of assistance remains to be of crucial importance for all involved.

Moreover, it is very important for us to have our Swedish capacities with regard to institutional capacity building identified and listed in order to be able to meet the needs of our counterparts in the Croatian state administration. This is important for our credibility and future cooperation. Costly assessments and studies carried out ad hoc and donor driven projects, lacking real demand are deemed to fail. The SCB-CBS statistical project is an outstanding good example of how a fruitful cooperation can develop when based on mutual understanding and flexible attitudes among experts from different cultures. This is definitely the kind of challenge that we should continue to address in our future cooperation policy.

The availability of Sida ITP courses has proved to be a valuable tool for developing our cooperation. Under the period four Croatian women were selected to participate in Sida ITP courses (Food safety & quality control and HR) and many more applied for courses that will take place later this year. These trainings are highly appreciated and give us a lot of good will, important for developing the co-operation.

Our updated Croatia Fact Sheet remains to be a very useful instrument for this office. It helps us to "sell" Sida, to make our presence visible and concrete.

This report from the integrated embassy hopefully shows that development cooperation really needs time and strength. In the last six months three important projects in institutional capacity building (PIU/ Cadastre, Agriculture/Land consolidation and Foster care reform), finally started after more than one year's preparations – including assessing the needs, planning of the programmes and other practical preparations. Good projects need time to be formulated and carefully prepared for.

It also needs to be pointed out, that in the middle of the most intensive working period (April), our office lost one of two posts. It will of course mean a severe reduction of the Sida office's working capacity. In order to fulfil our working plans, the recruitment of a new NPO needs to be addressed immediately and to be highly prioritised.

# Annex A

*Sida Office-Zagreb*  
17 March 2003

## List of Sida projects in Croatia

Budget year 2003

Organisation	Project	Amount (SEK)	Decision date
<b>LWF</b>	Integrated Area Programme 2003-04	30.491.800	030219
(Lutheran World Federation)	Reconstruction and livestock support to returnees		
<b>CSPI</b>	Study visit/Swedish Foster Care Model (preparation of project proposal)	98.000	030214
(Centre for Social Policy Initiatives)			
<b>SHC</b>	<b>6 projects in 2003</b>	2.451.950	030213
(Swedish Helsinki Committee)			
Croatian Helsinki Committee	Filed offices in Vukovar and Osijek	764.750	
Croatian Helsinki Committee	The Media Ombudsman	261.250	
SDF	Legal office/Knin, Kistanje, Benkovac	380.000	
DOS	Legal office/ Knin, Benkovac, Gracac, Zadar, Split	498.750	
Pusa/Knin	Multi-ethnic Youth Initiatives	190.000	
Center for Civil Initiatives	Youth Initiatives in Banovina	357.200	
<b>PRONI</b>	Social education programme for youth in 2003	2.000.000	030210
<b>SCB/ CSB</b>	Assistance to Meta and Macrodatabase	5.974.705 (until 2005)	030205
	Development/ phase II and III Phase I	3.415.000	020130
TA for the Sida Support Initiative			
"Developing an Improved Farm Structure"		60.000	030128
Agricultural reform- development of ToR/ consultancy input		62.400	020822
<b>U-Consult Sweden AB</b>	Procurement/ Cadastre PIU training (Cro, Ser, Kos)	196.000	030120
	Capacity building for the WB's PIU	4,800.000	030128
<b>Swedesurvey</b>	Feasibility study/Land administration and cadastre	173.410	010830
<b>SEI</b>	Refrigerant Management Plan for Croatia	200.000	030115
(Stockholm Environm. Institute)	(preparation of project proposal)		

<b>SPA</b> (Society for Psychological Assist.)	Capacity building of social service providers through training in supervision	1.024.000	(2003)
<b>IRCT Zagreb</b>	Repatriation Reconciliation Process in the region	750.000	(2003)
<b>Rädda Barnen</b> <i>Our Children Osijek</i> <i>Society Our Children Zg</i> <i>Center for Social</i> <i>Policy Initiatives</i>	<b>3 projects in 2003</b> Blue Phone Project Multi-ethnic Youth Initiatives Lobbying for Children's Rights	832.000 112.000 240.000 480.000	(2003)
<b>KtK</b> (Kvinna till Kvinna)	<b>12 projects in 2003</b>	3.010.694	021209
<i>CESI</i>	Women's Netw Summer School	217.607	
<i>BaBe</i>	Legal and Advocacy Skills	191.853	
<i>Women's Room</i>	Prevent. Research, Combating Sexual Violence	204.079	
<i>Women's Group Brod</i>	Psychosocial and legal counselling	274.968	
<i>Women's Club Donji Lapac</i>	Strong Together Project	309.738	
<i>Women's Group Korak, Karlovac</i>	Promotion and Protection of HR	479.497	
<i>Zena, Vukovar</i>	Women's Info Centre/ Education and P-S assist.	256.880	
<i>Stope Nade Benkovac</i>	Women's center in Benkovac	361.095	
<i>Center for Civil Initiative Porec</i>	Women and politics	263.855	
<i>Centre for Women's Studies</i>	Empow. of Women through Women's Studies	356.716	
<i>Croatian Women's Network</i>	Meetings	64.258	
<i>Roma Women's Association</i>	Empowerm. of Roma Women through Educat.	209.304	
<b>OPIC</b> (Olof Palme International Centre)	<b>6 projects in 2003</b>	1.864.000	021210
<i>Gender Task Force Center</i>	Women Can Do It	256.000	
<i>DIM</i>	Training Youth in Politics	256.000	
<i>GONG</i>	<i>First Time Voting</i>	200.000	
<i>Union of Autonomous Trade Unions</i>	Trainings	370.000	
<i>Center for Peace and HR Baranja</i>	IT Youth Training	479.497	
<i>ZAMIR</i>	<i>Revitalization of war affected areas using ICT</i>	382.000	
<b>IOM</b>	Counter-Trafficking in Western Balkans	2.200.000	(2002)



## List of Regional Sida Projects incl. Croatia

Organisation	Project	Amount (SEK)	Decision date
<b>Int. Bar Association</b>	Training of Judges, Prosecutors, Defence Lawyers and Police Investigators	590.000	030220
<b>CCPA</b> (Cross Cultures Project Assoc.)	Open Fun Football Schools in the Balkans	1.900.000	030212
<b>IWPR</b> (Institute for War and Peace Reporting)	Education of local journalists (2003)	3.200.000	030127
<b>KMH</b> (Royal University College of Music)	4 <sup>th</sup> Reg. Winter Music High School in Dubrovnik	810.000	030117
<b>KtK</b>	Evaluation of IOMs anti-trafficking programme	296.600	030114
<b>KtK</b>	Trafficking Western Balkans	5.000.000	021211
<b>ILAC</b> (Internat.Legal Assist. Consortium)	Formulation of regional JHA Action Plan (preparation of project proposal)	1.451.430	021210
	Regulatory and Quality Infrastructure Dev. for Food Safety and Quality Advanced regional ITP/INEC/Näring	2.700.000	021127
<b>Project Hope</b>	Preparing regional programme to fight AIDS	900.000	021113
<b>CoE</b>	CoE Criminal Law Reform in SEE (Oct 2002–Nov2003)	1.100.000	021001
<b>OECD</b>	Study on Trade in Services in SEE (Oct 2002–Nov2003)	2.750.000	021001
<b>Rädda Barnen</b>	Action Research on Child Trafficking	250.000	020822
<b>East-West Institute</b>	Transfrontier Coop. in Southern Adriatic	1.200.000	011129

# Annex B

*Sveriges Ambassad Zagreb*

*Date: 2003-01-15*

## Priority tasks for Sida-Zagreb January–June 2003

Task	Status
<b>GENERAL</b>	
General Agreement between the Government of Sweden and the Government of Croatia on general terms and conditions for development cooperation for the year 2002–2007	- Revised text of the Agreement to be officially submitted to the Government via the Ministry of European Integration in January–February
Semi-annual Report October–March 2003	- To be submitted
Revision of the Strategy for Croatia	- Work to be commenced and draft prepared
Represent Sweden at the EC's monthly Assistance Coordination Meetings with Member States;	- Ongoing
Visibility of Swedish development cooperation	- Information about projects and approved funds to be accurately provided to media
Sida's International Training Programmes	- Ongoing
<b>RETURN/ INTEGRATION</b>	
IAP in Lika area	- Ongoing
Follow up implementation of the IRCT project	- Ongoing
<b>HUMAN RIGHTS/ DEMOCRACY</b>	
Follow up all Sida-financed projects in Croatia: 12 KtK projects, 7 OPIC projects, 6 SHC projects, Proni project;	- Ongoing
Carry out an assessment of possible cooperation with the Croatian Government's Office for NGOs (possible study visit to Sida/SEKA)	- Awaiting project proposal from the Government's Office
<b>INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING</b>	
<u>Statistics</u> – follow up and support implementation of the project with the Croatian Statistical Bureau;	- Ongoing - Information to media about Swedish contribution to the statistical sector to be improved
<u>Land Registry and Cadastre</u> –	- Speed-up decision making process regarding the pending proposal - Start implementation of the bridging project
<u>Ministry for European Integration</u> – asses ways of Swedish support to the Ministry	- Sida to find available implementing partners before TOR and project proposal are done
<u>Agricultural standards</u> – assess possible cooperation addressing adoption and development of the standards	- Discussion paper on potential support to Ministry of Agriculture forwarded to the Ministry for consideration - Further discussions with the Ministry to take place in March 2003
<u>National Environmental Protection Agency</u> – assist in development of the newly established agency	- Sida regional coordinator for environment to pay a visit to the Ministry and outline future cooperation
<b>POTENTIAL AREAS OF COOPERATION</b>	
Children rights and status of vulnerable children/preparation for new project to be done	- To be assessed
Foster Care Policy/ assist in policy development	- Project proposal received from the Center for Social Policy Initiatives - Preparation for study visit to Sweden in March to be completed
Adriatic Sea Partenariat	- Feasibility study presented/ continuation to be considered
Decentralization reform	- Initiante consultations regarding possible cooperation with Association of Towns and Municipalities
Croatian Association of Journalists	- Awaiting project proposal for training of journalists
<b>VISITS</b>	
Arrange programmes for Sida-visits to Croatia	Magdalena Svensson – 20-22/01 ILAC's visit – 30-02/02 Gunnel Unge – 17-20/02 Peter Herthelius – 3-6/03 Björn Mossberg



*Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.*



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