

India - Croatia Bilateral Relations

The Republic of Croatia (Republika Hrvatska in Croatian language, population around 3.9 million) proclaimed independence on 25 June 1991 after breaking away from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

2. India formally recognized Croatia in May 1992 and diplomatic relations were established on 9 July 1992. Croatia opened its Resident Mission in New Delhi in February 1995. The Indian Mission in Zagreb was opened on 28 April 1996, and upgraded to Ambassadorial level in January 1998.

3. During the days of former Yugoslavia, Croatia played an important role in the close links between India and Yugoslavia. Croatia accounted for more than two-thirds of trade between the two nations, including large scale purchases of Croatian ships by India in the 1970s and 1980s. Marshal Tito, who ruled Yugoslavia for more than three decades, was a Croat, and maintained close relations with the Indian leadership. Prime Minister Nehru and Marshal Tito were also pioneers of the Non-Aligned Movement.

4. These friendly linkages with India have continued after Croatia's independence, though Croatia's initial focus after independence was on addressing the ethnic conflict that followed the breakup of former Yugoslavia, and thereafter on integration with NATO (1 April 2009) and the European Union (1 July 2013). Croatia has joined the Schengen Zone and adopted the Euro currency on 1st January, 2023, fulfilling all criteria in challenging times. Croatian Government's next focus is to join Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development (O.E.C.D.).

5. **High level visits:** From Croatian side, there was a series of high-level visits in the years after independence. Then President Stjepan Mesić paid a State Visit to India in November 2002. Visits at the level of Dy PM took place in April 1995 (Mate Granić, who was also Foreign Minister) and November 2000 (Goran Granić). Ministerial visits took place in April 1992 (Zvonimir Separović, Foreign Minister), November 1998 (Nenad Porges, Minister of Economy), March 1999 (Bozo Biškupić, Minister of Culture), May 2001 (Tonino Picula, Foreign Minister) and September 2003 (Pave Zupan Rusković, Minister of Tourism). After a gap, high-

level visits resumed with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Marija Pejcinovic Buric visiting India in October 2018.

6. From the Indian side, President Shri Ram Nath Kovind paid a State Visit to Croatia in March 2019. Former Vice-President Shri M. Hamid Ansari visited Croatia in June 2010. Other ministerial visits are Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Commerce Minister (September 1994), Dr. B.B. Ramaiah, MOS (Commerce) (September 1997), Shri Shatrughan Sinha, Minister of Shipping (August 2003), Shri Digvijay Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs (September 2003), Smt. Bhavnaben Chikhaliya, Minister of State for Tourism & Culture and Parliamentary Affairs (October 2003), Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences (February 2007), Shri Anand Sharma, Minister of State for External Affairs (September 2007), Smt. Preneet Kaur, Minister of State for External Affairs (February 2014), General (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd), Minister of State for External Affairs (April 2016) and Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Commerce and Industry [Independent Charge] (February 2017).

7. Over the years, a number of Croatian Members of Parliament (Parliament is known as Sabor) have visited India, including Vladimir šeks, Acting Speaker (March 1999), Zdravko Tomac, Deputy Speaker (January 2003), Marija Lugaric (January 2007), Furio Radin, Chairman, Committee on Human and National Minority Rights (Feb 2008), Luka Bebic, Speaker (March 2010) & Veljko Kajtazi, MP for National Minorities and President of Indo-Croatian Parliamentary Friendship Group (March 2018). From the Indian side, Speakers of Lok Sabha have visited in July 1997 (Shri P.A. Sangma) and July 2002 (Shri Manohar Joshi)

8. **Recent G-2-G Engagements:** On 3rd September 2021, EAM Dr. S Jaishankar paid the first ever Official visit by Indian EAM to Croatia. He met with Prime Minister of Croatia H.E. Mr. Andrej Plenković in Zagreb and discussed opportunities to further expand bilateral cooperation, including in pharma, digital and infrastructure as well as "pressing global issues". EAM Dr. S Jaishankar also met with his Croatian counterpart Gordan Grlić Radman. On 2-4 March, 2023 Foreign Minister Radman visited New Delhi to attend Raisina Dialogue. In the bilateral meeting with the EAM, Dr. Jaishankar, the two Ministers signed the MoU on Defence Cooperation, apart from discussing other important areas of bilateral relationship.

On the fringes of the COP26 conference in Glasgow on 1 Nov 2021, Croatian PM Plenković met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

9. Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi, MoS visited Croatia twice – first in April on a bilateral visit and then in July to participate in the prestigious Dubrovnik Forum. Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe President, ICCR visited Dubrovnik to attend 10th Dubrovnik International conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Puranas (DICSEP) in August, 2023. These visits are indicators of our growing partnership, particularly in the areas of 4Ts – Trade, Technology, Tourism and Talent.

10. From Croatia, Ms. Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic, former President of Croatia visited India in March, 2023 under ICCR's Distinguished Visitors Programme (DVP) where she visited four Indian cities, viz, Delhi, Hyderabad, Udaipur and Agra and gave public addresses in three of those cities. Earlier, under ICCR's DVP, Mr. Veljko Kajtazi, President of India-Croatia Friendship Group in the Croatian Parliament, had visited India in March 2018. Mr. Marko Filipović, Mayor of Rijeka and Mr. Domagoj Hajdukovic, Member of Parliament visited India under ICCR's Gen Next Democracy Network Programme in April 2023. In February, 2023, former S&T Minister and world's leading genetic forensic expert, Dr. Dragan Primorac made his maiden visit to India as the Professor Emeritus of the National Forensic Sciences University in Gandhinagar. Later, on 7th September, 2024, Dr. Primorac met with PM Shri Narendra Modi on in New Delhi. During the extremely cordial one-hour meeting, Dr. Primorac and PM Modi discussed the intensification of cooperation between India and Croatia in healthcare.

11. Nine rounds of Foreign Office Consultations (FoC) at Secretary-level took place between 1995 and 2011. More recently, the 11th session of India-Croatia FOCs were held on 30 April 2024 in New Delhi, led by Shri Pavan Kapoor, Secretary (West) and Dr. Petar Mihatov, Director General in MoFEA of Croatia, where the two sides carried out a comprehensive review of the existing bilateral relations including strengthening of cooperation in areas of trade and economic, defence and maritime, science & technology, innovation, research & development, tourism, culture, and people-to-people ties.

12. **Important Bilateral Agreements/MoUs:** The following agreements / MoUs have been signed between the two countries:

- Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (2017). Flowing from this, the first India-Croatia Joint Business Council was set up in April 2017. Separately, the Joint Economic Commission under the Agreement, met in New Delhi in November 2017.
- Maritime Transport Agreement (1997).
- Agreement on Cooperation in Culture, Science & Technology, Education and Sports (1999).
- Agreement on Cooperation between Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Croatia and Foreign Service Institute (FSI), Ministry of External Affairs (2000).
- Modified Air Services Agreement (2000). Croatian Airlines and Air India entered into a Code Share Agreement in November 2016, which came into effect on 1 April 2017.
- Agreement on Cooperation in the Fight against International Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Terrorism, etc. (2001).
- Agreement on Agricultural Cooperation (2002).
- Agreement on Exemption of Visa Requirement for Holders of Diplomatic and Official / Service Passports (2007).
- Agreement on Cooperation in Health and Medicine (2010). The first JWG on Health and Medicine was held in Delhi in February 2018.
- Agreement on Double Taxation Avoidance (2014).
- Agreement on Gainful Occupation of Family Members of Diplomatic and Consular Posts (2018).
- Cooperation between Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (HBOR) and EXIM Bank of India (2000).
- Cooperation between Export Credit & Guarantee Corporation of India Ltd. (ECGC) and Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (HBOR) (2002).
- Programme of Cooperation in Science and Technology for 2005-08 (2005).
- Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for 2005-07 (2005), which was followed by subsequent renewals last one on 15 Dec 2023 CEP for the period 2023 to 2025.
- Educational Exchange Programme (2006), renewable every five years.
- MoU between ICCR and University of Zagreb for establishment of ICCR Chair of Hindi (2009). The MoU was renewed during President's State Visit to Croatia (2019).

- MoU for establishment of ICCR Sanskrit Chair between ICCR and University of Zagreb (2019).
- MoU on tourism cooperation between Ministry of Tourism of India and Ministry of Tourism of Croatia (2019).
- MoU on sports cooperation between Sports Authority of India and Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb (2019).
- MoU on Defence Cooperation between India and Croatia (2023)

13. **Economic and Commercial Relations:** Bilateral Trade (2023-24): Total merchandise trade with Croatia- US\$ 291.36 million. India's Exports to Croatia- US\$ 233.30 million, India's Imports from Croatia- US\$ 58.06 million, Trade Surplus- US\$ 175.24 million, Latest available figures of India's trade with Croatia are given below:

India-Croatia Bilateral Trade

(In million US\$)

Year	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025 (Apr-Nov)
India's Exports	141.91	493.18	339.73	233.30	182.35
India's imports	42.81	59.43	117.54	58.06	42.77
Total Trade	184.71	552.61	457.27	291.36	225.12

(Source: Department of Commerce of India)

14. India's exports include aluminium ingots, chemicals and fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, machinery and equipment, metals, ready-made garments and textiles, rubber and plastics, while India imports plastic & rubber machinery, instruments and appliances for measuring and testing, food products and wood products.

15. According to latest available figures published by Croatian National Bank, Indian total direct investment into Croatia, during the period 2001- Q3 2022, amounted to Euro 40.05 million, while Croatia had Euro 5.55 million of direct investment into India in the same period.

16. In pursuance of the Article III of the Agreement on Economic Cooperation between the Government of India and Government of Croatia signed on 14th Feb 2017, the Second Session of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation was held in a virtual format on 13 October, 2022. The Joint Commission Session was co-chaired by Ms. Nidhi Mani Tripathi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and

Industry (Department of Commerce), Government of India on the Indian side and by Ms. Nataša Mikuš Žigman, State Secretary, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the Croatian side.

17. As regards investments, despite being a small market, some Indian companies are now present in Croatia. ACG World Wide acquired Lukaps (Ludbreg) in 2007 and has since become a major supplier of gelatine capsules to EU. It also acquired a Croatian IT company, IN2 Trace, specializing in pharmaceutical serialization solutions, in April 2017.

18. Capital Group of India through the Croatian Subsidiary Karma Group has invested in Agro & real estate sector in Croatia. Orient Green Power (Europe) owned by Orient Green Power (Chennai) invested in construction of wind power plants near Sibenik in 2011. Infosys Engineering Delivery Centre was officially opened (Karlovac) in 2017 after taking over GE engineering operations, with 100 qualified engineers, making it the main near shore Centre for Europe. JGL, a Croatian pharmaceutical company signed two five-year license agreements with Dr. Reddy's in 2017. Croatian-Hungarian trading company A&A BIOENERGY VIRO invested in cogeneration plant for wood biomass of 3 MW electric power output at the Antunovac Entrepreneurial Zone in Virovitica in November 2019. Power plant uses the Indian turbine which was purchased from TRIVENI TURBINES Ltd. Karma Agro signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government of Petrinja, which envisages up to €50 million investments in agriculture in the Petrinja area in growing hazelnut, walnut and chestnut plantations.

19. Croatian company Altpro, specialist in research, development and production of safety and signaling equipment for rolling stock and infrastructure, signed a contract with Indian company Sigma (owned by Texmaco) for supplying its product "Train Detection System" and ToT. In October, 2020, the joint venture was awarded Euro 5.3 million contract by Indian Railways for supplying signalling equipment.

20. Croatian engineering major Končar signed several contracts with Indian industrial groups such as Jaypee and Virgo for mutual cooperation. Končar is actively involved in some small hydro power projects in India.

21. Infobip, one of Croatia's leading IT companies, has been doing business with Indian companies since 2009. Infobip collaborates with some of the largest, leading companies in India and it has offices in New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Pune.

22. Telegra, Croatian artificial intelligence traffic management company installed Electronic Toll Collection System (ETCS) at one of the highways in India and exported some of Croatian Road Traffic Signalling Equipment to India. MM Farmachem, the Croatian pharmaceutical company has been doing business with Indian companies since 2004.

23. During the visit of Hon'ble President of India H.E. Shri Ram Nath Kovind to Croatia in March 2019, a 35-member business delegation consisting of members from Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) also visited Croatia. The India-Croatia Business Forum and B2B meetings were held in coordination with the Croatian Chamber of Economy (CCE). The occasion was also used for signing MOUs between the Croatian Chamber of Economy and FICCI, ASSOCHAM, CII.

24. Digital & Startup Ecosystem Cooperation: India-Croatia Startup Bridge was launched by HAMAG BICRO from Croatia and Startup India from India on 20th December 2021. Later, India-Croatia Startup 50-day long challenge was organised from 10 April 2022 in collaboration with Infobip, Končar - Electric Vehicles Inc., and HexGn, supported by the Embassy of India, Zagreb.

25. **Cultural Relations/ People to People Ties:** India has been well known in Croatia for centuries, and the earliest Croatian visitors to India were Missionaries. Links have been found between the Principality of Dubrovnik and Goa, and the Church of Sao Braz was reportedly built by Croatians around 1563 in Goa. Ivan Filip Vezdin, a Croat, is credited with publishing the first printed Sanskrit grammar in 1790, and plaque to commemorate him was unveiled in Trivandrum in 1999.

26. In contemporary times, a Department of Indology has been functioning at the University of Zagreb for more than 60 years. There is also widespread interest in Yoga and Ayurveda in Croatia. There are several India-oriented cultural Societies in Croatia, comprising mostly of Croatian nationals, such as Yoga in Daily Life, Art of Living, ISKCON, Bhakti Marga, Vedic Centre. A number of Croatian students have learnt various forms of Indian classical dance in India under ICCR scholarships as well as on self-financing basis. In response to demand for Hindi, a Hindi Chair was set up by ICCR in 2009 at the Indology Department of the University of Zagreb, which was renewed in 2019 during visit of Rashtrapatiji to Croatia. Similarly, an MoU was signed during Rashtrapatiji's visit to Croatia in 2019 for establishment of a Sanskrit Chair in the Indology Department of the University of Zagreb, which has started from the 2022 Fall Semester. The Indology Department has been active in promoting Sanskrit and Hindi in Croatia. During celebration of Vishwa Hindi Diwas 2024, at Department

of Indology in University of Zagreb, a special Hindi poetry book 'Bharat' was released on 20 March, 2024. The poem collection is a presentation of 30 poems translated into Hindi from the Croatian poetry book "Slon Siroče" written by the first Ambassador of Croatia to India, Drago Štambuk.

27. A Cultural Exchange programme for the period 2019-22 was signed during the October 2018 visit of former Croatian DPM and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Ms. Marija Pejcinovic Buric to India. This is renewed in December 2023 upto March, 2025.

Mahatma Gandhi bust, donated by ICCR during Rashtrapatiji's visit in March 2019, was unveiled by Croatian PM and Mayor of Zagreb at the famous Bundek Park in Zagreb on 2nd October 2019 to mark Gandhi@150.

28. President, Indian Council For Cultural Relations (ICCR), Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe visited Dubrovnik on 14-15 August 2023 and delivered a keynote address at the ICCR- supported 10th Dubrovnik International Conference on Sanskrit Epics and Puranas (DISCEP) on 76th anniversary of Independence Day of India at the final event of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav in Croatia at Inter University Centre Dubrovnik on 15 August 2023. DG, ICCR visited Croatia from 25-27 October 2021 and met with Mrs. Nina Obuljen Koržinek, Minister of Culture of Croatia.

29. In 2024, two 8-member each ICCR-sponsored groups visited Croatia. First, Bhangra Folk Dance Group visited to Croatia in February, 2024 to participate in 41st International Carnival Parade in Rijeka, which was attended by over 10,000 persons. The group also gave performances in Zagreb and Bjelovar. In July, 2024, another group, Ramayana Theater Group - Roopvani visited Croatia and gave three performances in Novigrad at the "Indian Summer in Istria" festival on 2nd July, followed by 64th Annual Sibenik Children's Festival in Sibenik and the last one at city of Karlovac. A 10-member Kalaripayattu martial dance troupe from Kerala performed in the famous Rijeka Carnival and in Zagreb in February 2020. A year long festival titled "India: Indus Valley and Beyond" showcasing Indian civilization in all its manifestations through lectures, workshop, travelogues and exhibitions started in Archaeological Museum of Zagreb, in partnership with the Mission, on 02 March 2020. Since 2016, a tradition has commenced of taking out the annual 'Ratha Yatra' in downtown Zagreb, to replicate the age-old ancient tradition of Odisha.

30. **Sports Cooperation:** An important milestone in India-Croatia sports cooperation was the appointment of Croatia's famous footballer Igor Stimac as the head coach of Indian national football team for a two year term starting from

15 May 2019, which was further extended by one more year. Three Croatian football players have been contracted recently by Indian clubs and a few Indian male and female players have attended training programme in Croatia in 2022.

31. International Day of Yoga: Mission has been organising International Day of Yoga since its inception in 2015. In IDY-2024, a total of 65 yoga events were held all over Croatia between 1-21 June, 2024.

32. **Academic & University Cooperation:** In order to strengthen P2P connections through Academic cooperation between India and Croatia, the following new partnerships have been launched:

- IIT Gandhinagar and University of Zagreb - Faculty of Electronics & Computers (FER)
- IIT Indore and University of Osijek - Faculty of Electronics & IT
- IIM Lucknow and University of Zagreb - Faculty of Economics & Business (FEB)
- Sharda University, Delhi and University of Zagreb based in Varazdin – Faculty of Organization and Informatics (FOI)
- Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), Bhubaneswar and University of Rijeka
- ICCR Hindi Chair at University of Zagreb
- ICCR Sanskrit Chair at University of Zagreb

33. **Indian Community:** The Indian community in Croatia has changed over the last three years rapidly due to demographic situation in Croatia where a lot of foreign workers are being employed for carrying out work in different sectors of economy. The number of Indians residing in Croatia jumped to over to approximately 17000 in December, 2024 from 12000 in December, 2023 and roughly 7500 in December, 2022. Many of the Indian workers are working on short to medium term contracts and therefore at least, 90% of the people among currently residing are those who form a part of the mobile population staying in Croatia for a specific contractual period. As on 31 January, 2025, the exact number of Indian nationals in Croatia is 17139 in total, by and large consisting of Indian migrant workers, - out of which 82 are OCI holders and 21 hold PR in Croatia. *[Source : Ministry of the Interior, Republic of Croatia].*

May 2025