



INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE SEEKING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

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UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency





What kind of international protection can Croatia offer me?

If you are in Croatia, and you need protection because you have been – or are afraid of being – persecuted in your country, you may be granted asylum. This includes fear of persecution for belonging to a particular race, religion, ethnic or social group (for example, for being LGBTQI+, a person with a disability, a human trafficking survivor, etc.), or for holding a particular political opinion. If you do not meet the conditions for asylum, you may still be granted ‘subsidiary protection’ if you cannot return to your country due to the threat of a death penalty, execution, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or if there is serious risk to your life due to widespread violence as part of an armed conflict.



**A poor economic situation
or unemployment in
your country are not
reasons for being granted
international protection.**





What is the first thing I have to do? Express your intention to seek international protection to the authorities.

- Request international protection immediately, or as quickly as possible, as soon as you enter Croatia. For example, this can be done at the border, at a police station or with the first police officer you see, or if you are detained at a ‘Reception Centre for Foreigners.’
- You can request international protection if you have been stopped while crossing the Croatian border irregularly or staying irregularly in Croatia.
- In any interview with the police, you have the right to an interpreter, which might be in-person or over the phone: do not hesitate to ask for this.
- State clearly that you need protection, that you are afraid to return to your own country, and that you have been persecuted in your own country or that your life is in danger. You may also write this down, sign the paper and hand it to a police officer. You can do this in any language.
- If you are under 18 years of age and have arrived in Croatia alone, we encourage you to immediately inform a police officer (if you are at the border or in a police station) or any other official (for example, if you are in a detention centre, your ‘inspector,’ or caseworker), so that a special guardian can be appointed to support you. Your special guardian will protect your rights during any administrative procedures.
- If you have arrived in Croatia with forged documents or documents belonging to another person, say so openly and explain why. This is not an impediment to receiving international protection. If you have your own documents with you, show them.
- If you are taken to court, repeat that you are seeking protection and request that this be noted in the court records.

- After you have stated that you need protection, your fingerprints will be taken, provided that you are 14 or older, and you will be photographed. A deadline will be set, within which you will have to report to a Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection. These are currently located in Zagreb (often referred to as 'Porin') and Kutina.
- If you apply for protection in a detention centre in Ježevo, Tovarnik or Trilj, contact your 'inspector'. As above, you can also note in writing that you are seeking protection, and this can be in any language.
- A police officer should give you written information about the international protection procedure. If this is unclear, you may ask questions, or contact an organisation dedicated to helping people in need of international protection, also known as asylum seekers. Their contacts are at the end of this document.



What happens next? You complete an application for international protection.

- After being accommodated in a Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection, you will be invited for an interview with an official from the Croatian Interior Ministry ('MUP,' in Croatian), in the presence of an interpreter. During this first interview, your application for international protection will be registered. You submit your application verbally: only in exceptional situations can it be submitted in writing.
- If possible, to ensure you are comfortable when sharing the details of your application, the official and interpreter present will be of your same gender. If this is not possible, but this is important to you, you may voice your concern to the Ministry.
- The Interior Ministry official will ask you to state your personal data; describe the route you took to arrive in Croatia, and explain

your reasons for seeking protection. If any of the questions are not clear, you should feel free to ask the official interviewing you for clarification.

- It is important to cooperate with the authorities at all stages in the procedure.
- It is important that you give correct personal data, and that you describe as best you can all the reasons that caused you to leave your country and seek protection in Croatia. Giving false or inaccurate data may cause your application to be rejected.
- Mention all the important documents you have with you. If you do not have any documents with you, explain why.
- If, besides a fear of persecution, there are additional reasons which mean you cannot go back to your country, mention these also during the interview.
- After submitting your application, the Interior Ministry will verify whether Croatia is responsible for deciding on your application, under the Dublin Regulation.
- If it has been confirmed that Croatia is responsible for your case, you will need to wait up to six months for a decision, counting from the date on which it was determined that Croatia is the country responsible for your case.
- If the decision cannot be made within six months, you will be informed of the extended timeframe within which you can expect a decision. The maximum time for a decision to be delivered is 21 months under Croatian and EU law.
- The decision may be positive (granting you asylum or subsidiary protection) or negative (dismissing or rejecting your request for international protection).



What is the Dublin procedure? This identifies the European country responsible for deciding on your application.

In certain cases, another country in the European Union, or Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway or Switzerland will be responsible for examining your application for international protection, not Croatia:

- if you are an unaccompanied child and have a family member (e.g. parent, brother/sister, uncle/aunt, grandfather/grandmother) residing in any of the above countries;
- if you are an adult and have a family member (e.g. husband/wife, and in some countries, life partner or minor unmarried children) residing in any of the above countries, provided they were already your family members when you left your country of origin;
- if you have a work permit or visa issued by any of the above countries;
- if you have already requested international protection in any of the above countries (this can be determined if you have been fingerprinted);
- if you haven't requested international protection but have been fingerprinted while travelling irregularly in one of the above countries,
- if there is other evidence that you have resided or travelled through another of these countries, even if you have not been fingerprinted there.

If it is established that Croatia is not responsible for your application, a written decision will be issued, and you will be transferred to the country that is found to be responsible. This procedure may take some time: please be patient.



If you have a family member in another EU Member State, you can request family reunification. Family reunification may take some time, so be patient.



What happens after my application interview? A second interview will be held and a decision will be delivered.

- If it is established that Croatia is responsible for your application, according to the Dublin rules described above, you will be invited for an important interview.
- Another 'MUP' official will hear your detailed story, again in the presence of an interpreter.
- If possible, to ensure you are comfortable during the interview, the official and interpreter present will be of your same gender. If this is not possible, but this is important to you, you may voice your concern to the Ministry.
- You must attend this interview in person, regardless of whether or not you have a legal representative.
- If you do have a legal representative, they may also attend the interview.
- The interview may last a few hours.
- Your statements may be recorded using audio-visual devices. You will be informed about this in advance.
- Some applicants may be invited for an additional interview.





What do I need to know about the interview? You have to provide all important details and tell the truth.

- At the beginning of the interview, the official will explain the interview procedure to you.
- The official will ask questions regarding what happened or what is happening in your country, and will ask you in more detail about the information you provided during the first interview as part of your application for international protection.
- You should state everything that is important and relevant to your application, including why you left your country, how you were persecuted, and by whom.
- Everything you share, including your personal data, is treated as confidential. It will not be shared with anyone, including the authorities of your country of origin.
- If you cannot remember some details, such as specific dates or places, do not worry. Tell the truth, and do not give inaccurate information. You can explain if you cannot remember, or if you aren't sure.
- If you can, bring to the interview any documents which could help demonstrate that you suffered or feared persecution in your country, and make copies of these beforehand. For example, police summons, judgments, threatening letters, proof of detention, medical certificates, newspaper clippings, photographs, etc.
- If you do not have documents proving your identity, or if you used someone else's documents during your journey, explain why. The official will check all the documents you have with you.
- If there is anything you do not understand, do not hesitate to ask for additional clarifications.
- If you feel tired or emotional, do not hesitate to ask for a short break during the interview.
- You may be asked questions that you find difficult, or even embarrassing to answer. You may tell the official that you do not

feel comfortable responding, however, keep in mind that answering such questions may help the official reach a decision on your application. All information will remain confidential.

- Medical assessments could also be conducted, with your permission, in order to look for signs that might indicate past persecution or serious harm.
- If it is not possible to determine your identity or country of origin, you may also be subjected to a search, which could include examination of your mobile phone or computer.
- At the end, the official will read back to you the notes from the interview, with the help of the interpreter. If you notice that something was not written down correctly, or was omitted from the account, tell the official immediately, and he or she will correct this. You will then be asked to sign the interview notes. Once you have signed these, it will be considered that they are an accurate representation of what you said at the interview.
- If you think that the interpreter is not translating what you are saying accurately, or you are not satisfied with the manner in which the official is handling the interview, do not hesitate to express your concern, including if you wish to ask for another interpreter or official. This possibility should not be used without reason.
- If you are ill, or if you are prevented from attending the interview



It is important that you tell the truth, clarify any inconsistencies in your statement and explain in detail, to the best of your ability, why you left your country.

for any other justified reason, you must immediately inform your designated 'MUP' official, as indicated in your interview invitation letter. If you do not justify your absence within 2 calendar days from the initially scheduled interview time, the procedure will be terminated, which means that you will lose all the rights you hold as an applicant for international protection.



Do I have a right to legal assistance? Yes.

- When you express your intention to seek international protection, the official present has the duty to provide information about the procedure. You will also be given more detailed information during your first interview, in which your application for international protection is submitted.
- All applicants have the right to receive legal information about their case, for example regarding where it stands in the procedure. You can request this from a 'MUP' official at any point in the procedure.
- You may also engage a lawyer of your choice at any point in the procedure, using your own funds.
- Your application may be approved, rejected or dismissed. If your application is rejected, you are entitled to free legal aid for drafting an appeal before the Administrative Court. If your application is dismissed, you may be entitled to free legal aid. A 'MUP' official will provide you with information on your rights when you are issued a decision.
- A list of lawyers who provide this free legal aid will be shared alongside any negative decision issued regarding your application.
- As well as State-funded support, there are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that can provide legal information or advice during the procedure, such as the Croatian Law Centre (Hrvatski pravni centar), whose contact details are below.





Do I have any other rights and obligations while I am waiting for a decision on my application for international protection? Yes.

- If you are seriously ill, you have the right to medical assistance. Children have the right to primary and secondary education. You have the right to practise your religion provided that, by doing so, you do not disrupt the peace of other people.
- You acquire the right to work three months after the submission of your application for international protection, if the Interior Ministry has not decided on your application in that time. This only applies if the delay in decision-making cannot be attributed to your behaviour.
- You have the right to freedom of movement within Croatian territory. Do not leave Croatia during the international protection procedure.
- You have to comply with Croatian laws, as well as with the house rules of the Reception Centre if you are accommodated there, and you have to cooperate with officials.
- You must notify officials of any change of address within two days.



Ask an official to give you detailed information about these rights.



Where will I stay while waiting for a decision on my application? In a Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection.

- You will be granted free accommodation in a Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection, as well as three meals a day, personal hygiene supplies and a small allowance. If necessary, you

will also be able to receive footwear and clothes. There are two such centres, located in Zagreb (often referred to as 'Porin') and Kutina.

- In the Reception Centre, you may share a room with people of the same sex. If you have arrived with your family, you will be placed together.
- You must respect others, and follow the 'house rules' and instructions given to you at the Reception Centre.
- During the evening hours established by the 'house rules,' you must stay inside the Reception Centre, unless a 'MUP' official has approved your absence.
- If you wish to leave the Reception Centre, you must inform a 'MUP' official.
- If you have funds, you must cover the costs of your accommodation at the Reception Centre if requested to, or seek official permission to reside in private accommodation outside the Reception Centre.
- If residing in private accommodation, make sure that you can receive calls and post from the 'MUP' at this address (write your name and surname on the doorbell and on the mailbox). If you are unable to receive official notifications from the authorities, it may be assumed that you have left Croatia, and your application for international protection may be closed.



As an applicant for international protection, you have a right to stay and move freely throughout Croatia. However, if you are residing in a Reception Centre, you must follow its 'house rules.' Do not leave Croatia during the international protection procedure as you could be sanctioned, including through restrictions on your freedom of movement.



Why have I been detained in a 'Reception Centre for Foreigners' Because a decision has been issued restricting your freedom of movement.

- There are several reasons why you might have been detained in Ježevo, Tovarnik or Trilj.
- Croatian law allows for the detention of applicants for international protection in certain circumstances, including in the situations listed below.
- Applicants who request international protection after they are detained during a deportation procedure from Croatia may remain in detention during the international protection procedure.
- The Croatian authorities may also decide to detain an applicant if they believe there is a risk that they will abscond (leave Croatia irregularly), for example if the individual has attempted to do so repeatedly in the past, before the completion of the international protection procedure.
- Applicants may also be detained if it is deemed necessary in order to establish your identity or nationality, or any other facts and circumstances on which your application is based.
- Applicants may also be detained for reasons of national security and protection of the public order; for preventing the spread of infectious diseases, or for preventing endangerment of lives and property.
- You have a right to appeal to an Administrative Court free of charge, in order for the Court to review whether the decision to detain you is justified under Croatian law. The official that notifies you of a detention decision will also provide you with a list of lawyers who can represent you free of charge in any such challenge before the Court.



You can request a detailed explanation of the reasons for your detention from the 'MUP' official who notified you of the detention decision. This is also applicable in the case of any other measures restricting your freedom of movement that may have been applied.

You have the right to receive a copy of the official decision on your detention or restriction of freedom of movement, and to file an appeal against this decision before the Administrative Court.



What if I receive a negative decision rejecting my application for international protection? You can appeal.

- Any negative decision will contain instructions concerning the timeframe within which you may file an appeal with the Administrative Court, to request a review of the rejection.
- If you do not file an appeal against the negative decision, or if your appeal is dismissed, you will have to leave Croatia. If you do not leave Croatia, you may be apprehended for irregular stay, and detained in a 'Reception Centre for Foreigners,' from which you will be deported from Croatia.



Be careful, the deadlines for filing an appeal are sometimes short: react immediately and seek legal assistance.



What if I am granted international protection?

- You will be granted the possibility of staying in Croatia, and you will acquire additional rights.
- These relate to employment, healthcare, education, and many other areas of daily life.



If you are granted international protection (asylum or subsidiary protection), you will be given more detailed information concerning your rights and obligations, as well as a booklet explaining important information about life in Croatia, by an integration officer from the Ministry of the Interior.



Where can I request further assistance?

UNHCR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

HeinzeloVA 44, Zagreb
☎ (00385) (01)37-13-555
🌐 help.unhcr.org/croatia
✉ HRVZA@unhcr.org

HRVATSKI PRAVNI CENTAR (CROATIAN LAW CENTRE)

Bednjanska 8a, Zagreb
☎ (00385) (01) 48-73-965
🌐 hpc.hr | ✉ hpc@hpc.hr

HRVATSKI CRVENI KRIŽ (CROATIAN RED CROSS)

Ulica Crvenog križa 14/1, Zagreb
☎ (00385) (01) 46-55-814
🌐 hck.hr
✉ azil-migracije@hck.hr

CENTAR ZA MIROVNE STUDIJE (CENTRE FOR PEACE STUDIES)

Selska cesta 112a, Zagreb
☎ (00385) (01) 48-20-094
(00385) (0) 91-330-0183
🌐 cms.hr | ✉ cms@cms.hr

PRAVNA KLINIKA PRAVNOG FAKULTETA U ZAGREBU (LAW CLINIC OF THE ZAGREB UNIVERSITY LAW FACULTY)

PalmotićeVA ulica 30, Zagreb
☎ (00385) (01) 48-11-311
(00385) (01)48-11-320
(00385) (01)48-11-324
🌐 klinika.pravo.hr
✉ klinika@pravo.hr

ISUSOVAČKA SLUŽBA ZA IZBJEGLICE (JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE)

Maksimirska cesta 286, 10000 Zagreb
☎ (00385) (0)98-979-2298
🌐 hrv.jrs.net
✉ info@jrs.hr

PROJEKT GRAĐANSKIH PRAVA SISAK/CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT SISAK (PGP/CRP SISAK)

S. i A. Radića 6/5 (2. floor right), 44000 Sisak
☎ (00385) (44)571 752
Besplatni tel./free legal phone: 0800 200 098
🌐 crpsisak.hr
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BORDERS:NONE

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Further information on assistance and support is available in reception centres.

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