

COVID-19: Croatian Measures Limiting Travel, Imposing Quarantine and Social Distancing



March 2020

Due to the increased number of COVID-19 cases in Croatia, on 19 March 2020 and on 23 March 2020, the Croatian government updated the packages of measures aimed at:

- limiting the entry of the disease into the country, and
- enhancing the authorities' goal of getting control of the spread of the coronavirus.

The measures effectively quarantine the whole country and place severe restrictions on entry into the country and on social gatherings.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Croatia, like many other countries, is limiting cross-border travel into the country with significant impact for the mobility of a company's international workforce. The prohibition on entry into the country by individuals coming from high-coronavirus-case jurisdictions and other travel and quarantine measures that have been announced will impact companies with assignee populations in terms of existing and future assignments inbound to Croatia or outbound from Croatia. Employees and their families who may have received offers for an international assignment to Croatia may need to postpone the commencement of their assignments. This could cause some anxiety, stress, and inconvenience, especially where plans for relocation are already underway (or where they are already in Croatia on temporary visas).

The changes are affecting travel and daily life, may also mean delays, more administration, and a considerable amount of inconvenience for some companies, their affected employees, and the Croatian population, generally speaking, though it is in the interest of protecting public health and safety.

Travel/Border Crossing Restrictions

Starting 19 March 2020 and over the course of the 30 days to follow, new rules concerning border crossings are in force.¹ Permission to return to their countries of origin is granted to:

- nationals of the European Union (EU) member states, i.e., member states of the Schengen Area and countries associated with the Schengen Area, as well as members of their families, and
- third-country nationals who are long-term residents based on Council Directive 200/109 / EC of 25 November 2003.

The travel restrictions are being enforced on all Croatian borders crossings.

Crossing of Croatian borders may be allowed only for:

- health professionals, health researchers and associates, professionals in the care of the elderly, and persons requiring urgent medical treatment;
- cross-border workers;
- freight carriers and other transport personnel to the extent necessary;
- diplomats, police officers in the performance of their duties, civil protection services and teams, personnel of international organizations, and international military personnel in the performance of their functions;
- passengers in transit.

All foreign and Croatian nationals entering Croatia from the list of countries (available on the following link) will be issued a decision requiring them to go into a 14-day self-imposed isolation.

Moreover, all foreign nationals entering Croatia will be informed about their compulsory 14-day quarantine if they are coming from the following countries/territories:

- People's Republic of China: Hubei Province;
- Italian Republic;
- FR Germany: Heinsberg County in the German State of North Rhine-Westphalia;
- Republic of Korea: Daegu City and Cheongdo Province;
- Islamic Republic of Iran;
- Republic of Slovenia: Bela Krajina and Dolenjska.

Furthermore, starting 23 March 2020 new rules concerning travel within Croatia's borders are in force,² namely, leaving the area of one's permanent personal residence will be prohibited. The prohibition does not apply to the following:

- Those undertaking the transportation of necessary supplies;
- Employees who "migrate" daily to undertake their services, which are essential for: provision of health and veterinary care, delivery of medicines and medical supplies, maintenance of communal services, water supply and drainage, gas and electricity supply, security services;
- Public reporting;
- Residents requiring urgent medical care;
- Those who "migrate" for vital family reasons, such as the care of children and the elderly or the purchase of food and basic necessities;
- Commuting to work, if that work is necessary and cannot be done from home;
- Emergency and operational services involved in the prevention of the spread of COVID-19.

When entering or leaving the area of permanent residence the measures relating to (i) social distancing, (ii) not staying in public areas, and (iii) possession of a valid pass permit, must be observed.

Pass permit for entry or exit will be issued (depending on the reasons of granting) certified, and signed by the responsible person in the legal entity, selected family physician, or the Civil Protection Headquarters.

Measures on Limitation of Social Gatherings, Work in Retail, Service Activities, and Sports and Cultural Events

The new measures place severe restrictions on all social gatherings.³

The strict measure of social distancing requires avoiding close personal contact, and keeping at a distance from others of at least two (2) meters indoors and one (1) meter outdoors. In addition, there is a prohibition on holding any public events and gatherings of more than five (5) persons in one place.

Furthermore, the measures impose the suspension of trade activities with certain exceptions such as trade of food and hygiene items, pharmacies, specialized baby equipment stores, etc.

Additionally, suspension is in effect for all cultural activities including cinemas, theatres, and concerts, sports events inclusive of sport centers and gyms, restaurants and bars (with the exception of food preparation and delivery services), and service activities where close contact with clients is the norm (for example, hairdressers and pedicures).

Severe fines are possible for those who violate the above suspensions.

Employment Measures

According to the latest Decision, all employers are required to:

- organise work from home where possible;
- cancel meetings or organise tele-conferences and use other technologies to hold remote meetings;
- cancel business trips outside the country except as necessary;
- prohibit entry into workplaces of workers who have fever and respiratory distress, especially dry cough and shortness of breath.

Footnotes:

1 Odluka o privremenoj zabrani prelaska graničnih prijelaza Republike Hrvatske (available on the following link).

2 Odluka o zabrani napuštanja mjesta prebivališta i stalnog boravka u RH (available on the following link).

3 Odluka o mjerama ograničavanja društvenih okupljanja, rada u trgovini, uslužnih djelatnosti i održavanja sportskih i kulturnih događanja (available on the following link).

For additional information and updates, see the Croatian government's COVID-19-dedicated website (in Croatian): <https://www.koronavirus.hr/>.

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