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Report on Recent Developments and Climate Litigation in Croatia

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An administrative shift occurred following the reorganization of the Croatian Government in May 2024, when the former Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development was split and environmental competences were transferred to the newly established Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Transition, which has since become the central authority in this field. The energy sector in Croatia remains within the competence of the Ministry of Economy.

The Croatian Government has outlined an ambitious legislative agenda for the 2025 – 2026 period, largely driven by the need to further align national legislation with the EU law. A number of new legislative acts are expected to be adopted, alongside substantial amendments to existing framework laws; **however, the full scope and extent of these reforms have not yet been publicly disclosed.**

Among the most significant planned changes are major overhauls of the foundational **Environmental Protection Act and the Nature Protection Act**. In addition, a new **Air Protection Act** is scheduled for adoption in the second quarter of 2026.

In the field of biodiversity and conservation, Croatia is preparing legislation aimed at implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 on nature restoration. Further, the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2024/1157 on shipments of waste was anticipated in the second quarter of 2026, with a view to strengthening controls over cross-border waste movements. New legislation governing packaging and packaging waste is also expected by the end of 2026. In parallel, the development of a regulatory framework for alternative fuels infrastructure, covering both road and maritime transport, constitutes a legislative priority for this year.

In support of industrial decarbonisation, additional regulatory measures are being prepared, including new rules on the geological exploration and exploitation of energy resources, as well as amendments to the legal framework governing gas and electricity markets.

Finally, amendments to the **Criminal Code** are envisaged in order to ensure compliance with the relevant Directive 2024/1203; however, at the time of writing, the proposal has not yet been subjected to the public consultation process.

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Croatia is in the process of adopting **anti-SLAPP legislation** through the draft Act on the Protection of Persons Engaged in Public Participation, which has been subject to public consultation. Unlike Directive 2024/1069, which is limited to civil and commercial matters with cross-border implications, the Croatian draft law applies to disputes irrespective of whether a cross-border element is present, thereby providing a broader and more effective level of protection for individuals engaged in public participation.

At the parliamentary level, the Croatian Parliament in April 2026, adopted a conclusion accepting the draft Act, with all comments, proposals, and opinions submitted to the proposer for the preparation of the final legislative text. At the same time, concerns have been raised regarding the absence of safeguards against the misuse of criminal proceedings, particularly in cases of defamation initiated by private prosecution, which often exert significant pressure on journalists and human rights defenders. It has therefore been suggested that additional legislative instruments should be developed in the near future to address this type of abuse more effectively.

In December 2025, the Croatian Parliament adopted a comprehensive legislative package consisting of **the new Spatial Planning Act, the Construction Act, and the Act on Energy Efficiency in Buildings**. The reform aims to modernise and digitalise spatial planning procedures, accelerate the issuance of construction permits, and promote more efficient land use, including through instruments such as urban land consolidation. However, the adoption of these laws was accompanied by significant controversy and political opposition. Critics, particularly from opposition parties and local authorities, argued that the new regulatory framework disproportionately favours investors and large-scale development projects at the expense of public interest and spatial sustainability. Concerns were raised that the legislation may lead to overdevelopment, weaken environmental and spatial safeguards, and replicate problematic patterns of land use seen in earlier phases of privatisation.

One of the central points of contention relates to the redistribution of competences between different levels of government. The City of Zagreb and other local authorities have **initiated proceedings before the Constitutional Court, arguing that several provisions of the Spatial Planning Act infringe upon constitutionally guaranteed local self-government**. In particular, it has been claimed that the law enables the central government, or indirectly private investors, to bypass local planning processes in situations where detailed urban plans are not adopted within prescribed timeframes, thereby significantly limiting the autonomy of municipalities to regulate their own spatial development.

In 2026, Croatia witnessed significant **public protests against the planned construction of large-scale industrial poultry farms and slaughterhouses**, particularly in *Sisak-Moslavina* County.² The projects, promoted as a major private investment, envisaged a network of interconnected industrial facilities, including farms, hatcheries, feed plants, and slaughterhouses. However, instead of being assessed as a single integrated project, they were formally divided into a series of smaller, separate permit applications. This approach has been widely criticised as a form of “salami slicing”, designed to avoid a comprehensive assessment of cumulative environmental impacts.

Environmental and animal welfare organisations have argued that such fragmentation enables individual projects to be assessed in isolation, thereby circumventing the requirement to

² <https://zelena-akcija.hr/en/news/mega-slaughterhouses-and-chicken-farms-in-croatia-profit-for-the-investor-damage-for-the-environment-and-local-community>; <https://mreza-za-zastitu-zivotinja.com/mega-farms-and-a-mega-slaughterhouse-the-destruction-of-sisak-moslavina-county/>

evaluate their combined effects on the environment, public health, and local infrastructure, contrary to the purpose of the EIA Directive. In practice, this has led to situations where certain components of the overall investment were considered not to require a full EIA, or where parallel procedures failed to take into account the cumulative impact of the wider project.

Several thousand protesters gathered in Zagreb³ and later in Sisak,⁴ calling for a suspension of ongoing permitting procedures and a comprehensive, integrated environmental assessment of all planned developments. Despite strong public mobilisation, the outcome has been mixed. While pressure from civil society contributed to the suspension of at least one EIA procedure for a major component of the project and influenced decisions at the regional planning level, the broader development strategy – comprising numerous interconnected facilities – has not been definitively abandoned and remains subject to ongoing administrative procedures.

Significant Constitutional case law

1) Green Action – successful constitutional complaints

The Croatian Constitutional Court adopted two constitutional complaints⁵ filed by the environmental organization *Zelena akcija* (Green Action), effectively abolishing all legal and administrative prerequisites for a controversial real estate project on the *Srd* hill in Dubrovnik. The legal actions were part of a 15-year struggle, beginning in 2010, against a large-scale apartment and golf project deemed harmful to the public interest. The successful legal challenges led by *Zelena akcija* contributed to the rejection of a 500 million euro arbitration claim in May 2023⁶ filed by the project's investor against the Republic of Croatia. The European Commission recently confirmed that Croatia had violated the EIA Directive,⁷ validating concerns *Zelena akcija* had raised as early as 2019. *Zelena akcija* highlighted that while this is a significant victory for civil society and the public interest, they remain concerned that changes to the Spatial Planning Act could allow similar projects to proceed more easily in the future.

2) Eko Pan – successful constitutional complaint

The Croatian Constitutional Court adopted a constitutional complaint⁸ filed by the environmental organization *Eko Pan* regarding the *Drežničko polje* retention project. *Drežničko polje* (Drežnica Karst Field) is a highly valuable karst field and part of the Natura 2000 ecological network, serving as a critical habitat and a natural water purification site. The case, which began in 2014, centered on the fact that the project (led by *HEP* – national, state-owned

³ <https://www.croatiaweek.com/thousands-protest-zagreb-mega-poultry-farms-sisak-moslavina/>

⁴ <https://www.croatiaweek.com/croatia-protest-mega-farms-slaughterhouses-sisak/>

⁵ U-III-1233/2020, 29 October 2025,

<https://sljeme.usud.hr/Usud/Praksaw.nsf/C12570D30061CE54C1258D330030B5CF/%24FILE/U-III-1233-2020.pdf> and U-III-61/2020, 29 October 2025,

<https://sljeme.usud.hr/Usud/Praksaw.nsf/C12570D30061CE54C1258D33002E83A6/%24FILE/U-III-61-2020.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.corpwatch.org/article/citizens-dubrovnik-defeat-razvoj-golfs-luxury-resort-croatian-coastal-town>

⁷ INFR(2019)2022: The European Commission found that Croatia failed to correctly transpose the EIA Directive, as its legislation lacks key elements such as screening criteria for determining when an EIA is required. The Commission also identified the absence of obligations to include environmental conditions, mitigation measures, and monitoring requirements in development consent decisions. As a result, Croatia does not fully ensure that projects likely to have significant environmental effects are properly assessed and regulated before approval.

⁸ U-III-5807/2020, 17 September 2025., https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_11_137_2059.html

energy company) relied on outdated environmental impact study from 1998 instead of conducting a new assessment.

The court ruled that the right to a fair trial was violated and emphasized that the Aarhus Convention, which guarantees public participation in environmental decision-making, is part of the Croatian legal order and holds legal force above national laws.

The Constitutional Court noted that administrative bodies must act within a reasonable timeframe and that judicial decisions cannot be legally justified if based on data more than 15 years old. Despite this legal victory, *Eko Pan* expressed mixed feelings, noting that the legal process took over 10 years and that construction work on the site had already begun, which raises concerns about the actual efficiency of the legal protection system.

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Climate litigation

The current state of climate litigation in Croatia remains limited but is gradually emerging. In March 2026, *Zelena akcija* filed a climate-related lawsuit before the Administrative Court in Zagreb, challenging a decision of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Transition approving, within the EIA procedure, the environmental acceptability of the Zagreb Waste Management Centre. The claimant argues that the project promotes waste-to-energy solutions oriented towards incineration, which they consider environmentally and climatically harmful, and that the competent authority failed to adequately assess more sustainable alternatives focused on recycling and circular resource use. The case is framed around the obligation of public authorities to integrate climate considerations into environmental decision-making. At the time of writing, no hearing has yet been scheduled, and beyond this case, there are no other notable climate lawsuits currently pending in Croatia.