



Of Special Interest

- Anti-Corruption Plan Presented
- U.S. State Department: Croatia Respects Human Rights
- **Upcoming Event:** Croatian Composer Mario Perestegi to Hold Concert in Washington, Tour U.S.

Croatia in U.S. Media

- **Arizona Republic:** Destination, Croatia? – Tourism Future Bright for Croatia
- **CNN:** Janica Clinches Overall World Cup Victory

Ireland Supports Croatia on Its Way to EU



Above: Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader (left) along with his Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern, who praised Croatia for its progress in meeting EU membership requirements [Photo: www.htnet.hr]

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The Best in the World



Janica Kostelic clinched the World Cup title in the Super-G race, coming in 4th on Thursday, and winning the slalom on Friday in Are, Sweden. During the entire ski season, Janica showed impressive results and displayed great patriotism for her homeland. [Photo: Vecernji list]

Anti-Corruption Plan Presented



Prime Minister Ivo Sanader announced strong measures in the fight against corruption. [Photo: www.iskon.hr]

ZAGREB, Croatia, March 10 – Croatia will fight corruption not because the European Union demanded it but because the public expects it, Prime Minister Ivo Sanader said at a round table debate in the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences called **“The National Program on Corruption Prevention.”** The main objective of the anti-corruption plan is to reduce corruption as much as possible, with the help of all factors in society, said Prime Minister Sanader adding that regardless of political beliefs, fighting corruption must be a common goal for everyone.



Prime Minister Sanader said that fighting corruption must be a common goal of all Croatian citizens [Photo: www.htnet.hr]

The anti-corruption plan contains references to six areas: judiciary, health care system, government, economy, education and politics. In the judiciary, backlogs should be deferred to the burdened courts. Plans and supervision must be set for lengthy procedures and the judicial practice should be made public. Reform of the health care system must include an increase in hospital facilities. Patients must be informed about the waiting period for medical examinations and their personal data must be protected. Supervision must be secured over the local services. The law on elections for local government must be amended. Changes are to be introduced to the supervision of local government budgets. In the economy, a clear distinction must be made between what should be and what must not be privatized. A method of gradual withdrawal of the State from operational management of the leading companies should be proposed. Objectives and free market competition must be secured in tenders for financing of scientific research projects. Enrollment in universities must be subject to public and administrative supervision. The Right of Access to Information Act must be implemented consistently.

Ireland Supports Croatia's Path to EU

DUBLIN, Ireland, March 3 - The enlargement of the European Union has been its most successful foreign policy achievement, according to the man who, as the EU's External Relations Commissioner, presided over its biggest ever expansion. Chris Patten told the National Forum on Europe that enlargement should continue, as long as candidate countries meet the criteria for entry. Lord Patten, who is now Chancellor of Oxford University, said he particularly strongly supported the application to join by Croatia, whose Prime Minister Ivo Sanader addressed the same Forum session in Dublin Castle.



Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader and his Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern, who strongly supported Croatia's drawing closer to the European Union, planted the Irish Strawberry Tree at the state residence on the occasion of National Tree Week, which Ireland has been holding for more than two decades in view of raising ecological awareness. [Photo: www.htnet.hr]

The Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader warned against what he saw as 'Enlargement Fatigue' in the European Union. He told the Forum that he strongly believed that Europe's future should be different from its past. "If we want to have a secure and prosperous future for all our children, the only way is further EU integration", he said. The Prime Minister said Croatia was *'at the heart of Europe'*, more central than some of the existing Member States. In reference to the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, Prime Minister Sanader said "we cannot stop at 27 members". Prime Minister Sanader also pointed to the role which Croatia is playing in stabilizing the South East European region and the West Balkans. "Croatia is actively developing a strategic political and economic partnership with the region based on European principles", he said. "The process of accession to the EU and to NATO, and Croatia's progress in that regard, is undoubtedly a motivating factor for all the countries in the region."

During his visit to Ireland, Prime Minister Sanader was received by Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, who praised Croatia for what it had done so far to meet conditions for European Union membership. In order to improve economic relations between the two countries, Prime Minister Sanader proposed establishing a direct airline service between Zagreb and Dublin.

Arms Limitation Agreement Revised

ZAGREB, Croatia, March 10 - The 34th regular meeting of the Sub-regional Consultative Commission on regional arms control and verification was held in Zagreb on March 10, 2006 at the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Center (RACVIAC). During the meeting an Amendment to the Agreement on Sub-regional Arms Control [Annex 1B of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina – the Dayton Agreement] was signed by the parties to the Agreement (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro [originally as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia], the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska). The purpose of the Amendment was to bring the Agreement into line with the newly adopted Defense Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which the rights and obligations of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska – under the Sub-regional Arms Control Agreement have been transferred to the central authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina will hence forth be the sole representative of that country at the meetings of the Sub-regional Consultative Commission. The Sub-regional Arms Control Agreement was signed by the five parties to that Agreement in Florence on June 14, 1996.

U.S. State Department: Croatia Respects Human Rights



In its annual report the U.S. State Department said that Croatia respects human rights. [Photo: www.vip.hr]

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 8 - According to the U.S. State Department 2005 Report on Human Rights Practices, **“Croatia generally respected the human rights of its citizens.”** The report also quotes opinions of the OSCE mission, which says that the majority of exiled Serbs who wanted to come back have already returned to Croatia. The general impression is strongly positive. In 2005, the Croatian government “demonstrated increased willingness to prosecute war crimes committed by ethnic Croats and increased its cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).”

To see full report about Croatia, please go to: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61642.htm>

Chatman House Report: Croatia Is on Its Way to EU

LONDON, U.K. - The British Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA), also known as Chatham House, published its latest briefing paper on Croatia and EU in December 2005. The paper was prepared by Professor Richard Rose from the University of Aberdeen, who based his analysis on the work of the University's *Centre for Study of Public Policy* and its New Europe Barometer (NEB) study. The bottom-up approach of the study does not ask the standard question “What do Croats think of the EU?”, which often prevails in the Commission's questionnaires, but asks Croats what they think of their own government; how democratic, honest, respectful of human rights and market-oriented it is in their view. In addition, it compares the attitudes about the elections, democracy, and free markets in Croatia with the other eight newly admitted EU countries.

The study concludes that, “by the Copenhagen Criteria, Croat citizens consistently evaluate their government more positively than do the eight Central and East European countries admitted in May 2004. Croats show a stronger commitment to democracy than many member states; they expect their government to become more democratic; Freedom from the state is enjoyed. The market economy provides higher standard of living than is typical of new member states.” Finally, the report states that Croats have realistic views about the potential costs and benefits of EU membership.

This report can be downloaded in PDF form from: <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/pdf/research/europe/BPcroatia.pdf>

More Croatian Troops for UN Missions



The Croatian Army might increase the number of its troops in UN missions [Photo: www.poslovni.hr]

ZAGREB, Croatia, March 7 - A government proposal, if passed, would increase the number of troops allocated to UN peace missions, which could improve the Croatian position concerning NATO membership. The number of the troops should be increased to 64 by the end of 2007. This is in addition to the troops Croatia already has deployed in NATO peace-keeping missions, notably the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, where Croatia has 50 soldiers and will be sending a further 100 this year.

Completion of Rijeka-Zagreb Highway by 2008



By 2009 Croatia will have completed its highway infrastructure plans [Photo: Vecernji list]

RIJEKA, Croatia, March 9 – The European Investment Bank (EIB) has granted a EUR 210-million loan for the completion of the Rijeka-Zagreb motorway. The contract was signed by the CEO of the motorway company (ARZ) Jurica Prskalo and EIB vice-president Wolfgang Roth, both of whom committed themselves to the construction of a very complex piece of motorway construction that includes nine tunnels and eleven bridges, and that would be completed by 2008. The signing of the loan agreement was attended by Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, who said that the highway would facilitate access to the Adriatic for Europeans and improve the quality of life in Croatia, adding that in few years Croatia will have a highway that will become part of the future Adriatic-Ionian highway.

Croatia Hailed at International Bird Flu Conference

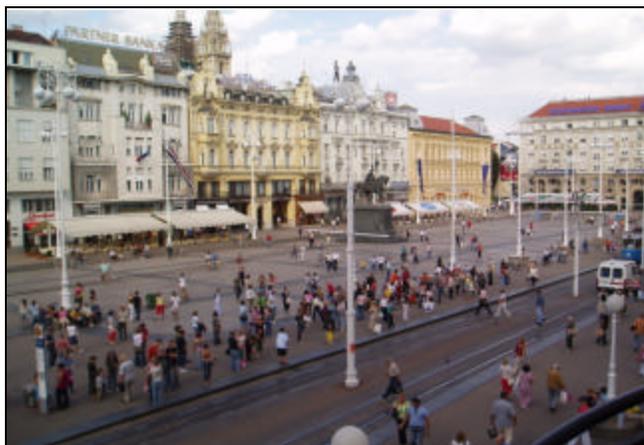


Dr. Vladimir Savic (right) received praised for his presentation on the bird flu situation in Croatia. [Photo: Embassy of Croatia]

ARLINGTON, Virginia, February 27-28 – Bird flu presents one of the most serious global health threats today, to which each country must react with the greatest urgency in order to prevent large-scale economic loss, but also to protect the health of individuals, speakers at the International Bird Flu Conference stressed last month in Arlington. Representatives from Croatia were among the 220 conference participants from all over the world, and the event was especially well represented by officials from countries with confirmed cases of the bird flu. Speaking at the conference, Dr. Vladimir

Savic, director of the Center for Poultry Farming at the Veterinary Institute in Zagreb, summarized the bird flu situation in Croatia, noting that the country's efforts at containing the virus were speedy and effective, and that efforts are now geared towards prevention. Since U.S. officials are preparing intensively for a possible pandemic, representatives of various domestic health care organizations, the Department of Health, law enforcement, and pharmaceutical companies attended the summit, apart from scientists and researchers. The presentation by Dr. Savic, and the Croatia Country Report, was proclaimed as one of the best presentations at the conference, by the hosts, but also according to Dr. Alex Thierman of the World Organization for Animal Health, and Dr. David Nabarro, of the UN Developmental Group. Croatia was hailed for its speedy and effective steps taken to contain and isolate the bird flu virus, which was found in wild birds in October, 2005. Also representing Croatia at the Arlington Summit was Renata Kunkera, economic counselor at the Embassy of Croatia in Washington.

Arizona Republic: Tourism Future Bright for Croatia



Zagreb's Ban Jelacic square is a bustling tourist attraction. [Photo: www.zagreb.hr]

PHOENIX, Arizona, March 5 – Croatia has a bright tourism future, writes the Austin American-Statesman in an article appearing in the Arizona Republic. As it turns out, the author, is pleasantly surprised by what she sees. Noting that the capital city of Zagreb has been dubbed “the new Prague,” the author explains that “its cobblestone streets, Gothic cathedral, coffee culture, cuisine and hilly backdrop reflect that for much of Zagreb's history it was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.” Numerous outdoor coffee bars speak of a strong café culture in the city: “In the evening, many of these *kavanas* convert into bars perfect for mingling, lounging and people-watching,” observes the author. Dubrovnik, the “crown-jewel” of the Adriatic, reflects the country's Mediterranean personality, and just one moment on midday's stroll above the city's terra-cotta-tile roofs captures Dubrovnik's eternal charm. The city of Split is the ‘port of call’ for the next morning, and the visitors eagerly anticipate what's just around the corner, exclaiming: “We can't wait to keep finding out.”

To read full article, please log on to: <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/travel/articles/0305croatia0305.html>

James Bond Film to Feature Croatian Actress



A rising star: Ivana Milicevic [Photo: www.yahoo.movies.com]

ZAGREB, Croatia, March 14, 2006 – Even though it has been decided that Goran Višnjić will not be the new James Bond, an actress with Croatian roots, Ivana Milicevic, has secured a role in the latest Bond movie, “Casino Royale,” opening later this year. Ivana, who has since 1983 lived in the U.S. with her family, will play the role of Valenka, wife of the bodyguard of the main villain in the film. The Croatian actress started her career as a model, subsequently turning to acting and appearing in popular TV shows such as Seinfeld, Felicity and Buffy, but also in films Vanilla Sky, Jerry Maguire and Resident Evil. Ivana may not be a new Bond girl – this honor went to Eva Green – but her appearance in “Casino Royale” is definitely one big step forward for her career.

Janica Clinches Overall World Cup Title



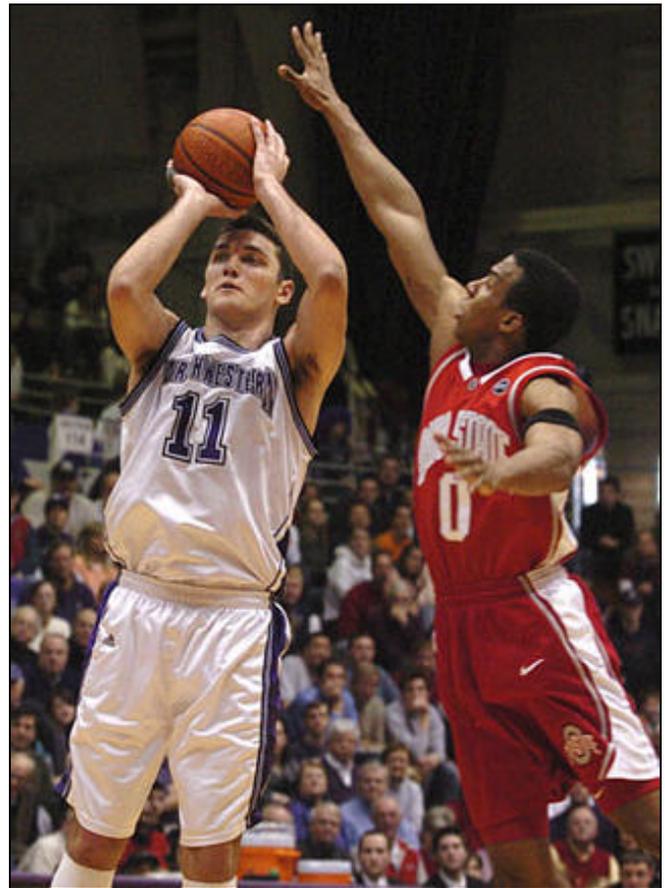
Janica Kostelic is one of the best athletes in the world. [Photo: AP]

ARE, Sweden, March 16 – Croatian skier Janica Kostelic clinched the women's overall title by coming in fourth in the women's super-G race on Thursday, but it was her spectacular performance on Friday - she captured first place

in slalom - which opened her way to surpassing Swede Pernilla Wilberg's World Cup record of 1,960 overall points in 1997. Friday's win puts Janica at a total of 1,870 points, and if she wins Saturday's giant slalom race, which closes the women's season, she will break an historical achievement. "It would be nice to challenge Pernilla's record," said Kostelic. Whether this happens or not, Janica, already a double World Cup champion, has wrapped up the overall and slalom cup titles.

To read CNN's article about Janica's triumph, go to: <http://www.cnn.com/2006/SPORT/03/17/skiing.kostelic.reut/index.html>

NU's Vukušić Bids Farewell, Remains an Inspiration



Next stop: NBA? [Photo: www.espn.com]

CHICAGO, Illinois, March 8 - Northwestern University's Vedran Vukušić has played his last game and is bidding farewell to NU. Although the game against Penn State ended in disappointment for NU (60-42), the senior forward, of Split, Croatia, leaves behind a legacy of success as the school's No. 3 all-time scorer with 1,586 points and as their all-time leader in three-point baskets (212). He has been the reason why the Wildcats were always close, a key force behind their improved performance in recent seasons. Considered to be a top-tier American college basketball player, Vukušić is not as well-known to the Croatian public. Still, many aspiring Croatian basketball players looked to him as an inspiration in their own ambitions of both studying and playing basketball in the U.S.

Upcoming Event

MARIO PERESTEGI'S CONCERT IN WASHINGTON AND U.S. TOUR



U.S. TOUR

Washington D.C., March 25th

Organ Recital
March 25th, 2006 at 6:30 p.m.
Saint Patrick's Church
619 Tenth St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20001
Admission free, donations appreciated!

Williamsburg, March 28th

New York, March 29th

Boston, March 31st

Chicago, April 2nd

Born in Zagreb in 1971, **MARIO PERESTEGI** studied organ under Professor Andrija Galun and church music at the Institute for Church Music in Zagreb with Professor Anđelko Klobučar. He then completed a Master's Degree in organ performance at the Music Academy in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in the class of Professor Hubert Bergant. Later, he perfected his interpretation of French organ music under the tutelage of the famous Parisian organist Marie-Claire Alain. Since 1996 he has been an Assistant Professor at the Zagreb University, where he teaches Aesthetics of Music and Organ Literature and at the Music Academy in Ljubljana he lectures on organ literature. Mr. Perestegi's concerts contain works for organ that were composed during the Baroque period, as well as contemporary 20th century works. His special interest lies in new compositions by modern Croatian composers. In addition to more than 200 solo concerts, he regularly performs as a chamber musician, giving concerts with singers, trumpeters and violinists. He has performed many times as a soloist with orchestras performing the works of Handel, Haydn, Bossi and Poulenc. Mr. Perestegi is a frequent guest of music festivals such as the Po Organ Evenings, Split Summer Festival, Evening at St. Donat, and Rab Evenings. Beyond Croatia, he often performs throughout Europe: Italy, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Austria, Germany and Latvia. And in 2005, Mr. Perestegi toured Australia giving concerts at the Sydney Cathedral, the Melbourne Cathedral and Canberra Concert Hall.

Brief News...

- The Ministry of Finance presents optimistic new data on the economy: budget revenue is up, industrial output has risen, and GDP has grown. Also, tax revenue and social welfare levies have increased. The Ministry expects the budget deficit to drop in 2006.
- French company CrosiEurope, a leading European river-cruiser company, has decided to expand its business to ocean cruisers. Their first 'excursion' to maritime cruising will be the Croatian Adriatic.
- A movie called "Croatia – The Mediterranean As It Once Was", directed by Zrinko Ogresta and produced by the Croatian National Board of Tourism, has won the first prize, the Golden City Gate, in the category promoting countries and regions at the central world tourist film festival in Berlin.



Award-winning Croatian director Zrinko Ogresta [Photo: www.iskon.hr]

- Croatia's Blanka Vlašić won the silver medal in the women's high jump event at the World Indoor Championship in Moscow on March 12, clearing 2.00 meters.



Croatian athlete, Blanka Vlašić is on her way to becoming the best in the world in the high jump discipline. [Photo: www.htnet.hr]

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