
Challenges in Facing the Actual Crisis:

Croatian and Slovenian Perspectives

On Tuesday, October 30th the Bologna University School of Political Science, Forlì Campus hosted an international conference titled "Challenges in Facing the Actual Crisis: Croatian and Slovenian Perspectives". The event, co-organized by IECOB Institute for Central Eastern and Balkan Europe, MIREES Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe



and the economic organizations ASSER (Italian-Slovene) and ASCER (Italian-Croatian), attracted a large number of participants, including students, entrepreneurs and highly ranked officials.

The event gave students and especially entrepreneurs the possibility to meet the Slovenian and Croatian representatives in order to deepen their knowledge on the investment and entrepreneurial climate in the two countries, through a series of individual meetings which preceded the conference.

The seminar began with a short address from the President of Mixed Chambers of Commerce, Pietro Baccarini, who greeted the audience and welcomed

the three esteemed speakers, Dr Rupel, Mrs Matanić and Mr Ljubunčić. Dr Dimitrij Rupel, Consul General of the Republic of Slovenia in Italy shared with the audience his vision of the crisis in Slovenia and suggested some possible ways of dealing with the present situation in that country. According to him, the roots of the crisis in Slovenia are to be found in the survival of political and social patterns inherited from socialism, in particular the «comrade networks». The transition to democracy was accompanied by a reproduction of the old models that should now be replaced by «rational action» on an international and national level. Dr Rupel emphasized how Slovenia should reconsider its role in the European Union in light of a closer cooperation with Mediterranean and Visegrád Group countries. In addition, the country would need to introduce further reforms and vehemently implement the existing ones in order to reach economic recovery. It is important for Slovenia to enhance its performance in the fields of education and culture through the establishment of new universities, the adoption of a new approach to the media and a change of political élites. In conclusion, the crisis should be managed, not ignored, in a way that democracy and modernity prevail.



Mrs Matanić, First Secretary of the Embassy of Croatia in Italy, briefly described Croatian recent history and presented the country's economic potential. Croatia's economy suffered greatly because of the war and the controversial process of privatization in the early Nineties. Today

	H1 2011	H1 2012	%CHG
Turn-over	138.5 bn	139.2 bn	+0.5
Export	18.4 bn	19.4 bn	+5.4
Employees	251,845	264,771	+5.1
Investments	9.1 bn	9.4 bn	+3.3

KEY TAKE-AWAYS:

- positive signals in SME segment:
- export by 10 p.p.
- followed by investments (+3%) and
- no. of employees (+2.5%)

Croatia is a service-based economy with the tertiary sector accounting for the 70 % of the GDP. The accession process to the EU brought the country to align with the *acquis communautaire*, introducing big changes in the economy. Presently, Croatia is coping with a slow post-recession recovery. The Government's main goals thus include economic recovery, growth and re-employment, while striving to curb foreign debt and attracting foreign capital and investors. The first Secretary also briefly presented some basic facts on opening new business opportunities in Croatia, with a special emphasis on tourism, a rapidly growing sector.

Sani Ljubunčić, Head of Sector at the Croatian Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts, delighted the entrepreneurs with a detailed description of investment possibilities in the country that is soon to become the EU's 28th member. The speaker pointed out several reasons why to invest in Croatia, where SMEs represent 99.7% of all businesses. Among others, he mentioned the country's strategic location, infrastructure, over twenty business zones ready for investment, a good logistic potential and highly educated and well-trained labor force. Together with investment promotion activities carried out by the Government, including equal treatment for foreign and domestic investors and a number of other incentives and grants, like the elimination of administrative barriers and EU structural funds availability, Croatia appears to be an attractive and investment friendly location.

The three presentations were followed by a vivid round-table discussion conducted by Professor Stefano Bianchini and Dr Alberto Amati, president of the associations ASSER and ASCER.

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