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**Geographical Names of National minorities in the Republic of Croatia**

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# **GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The last decade of 20th century was marked by political turmoil that led to the collapse of the socialist system in almost all countries in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Our country was a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Individual republics of the former state left the community, which along with the war that was imposed upon separate states including the Republic of Croatia, resulted in the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

The Republic of Croatia is a country developed after the disintegration of the SFRY, and as a successor of the former state it has chosen to implement the law on equality and achieving freedom and rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

The Republic of Croatia is now the state respecting the freedom and the rights for 22 national minorities. The citizens who are members of other nations present a national minority Republic of Croatia.

In accordance with the Article 15 of the Croatian Constitution the equality of all members of national minorities is guaranteed, as well as the freedom to express their nationality, freedom to use their language and script, and cultural autonomy <sup>1</sup>.

The official use of language and script of national minorities is regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, the Constitutional Law on National Minorities Act <sup>2</sup>, the use of language and script of national minorities in the Republic of Croatia, the Law on Education in the language and script of national minorities, County Statutes and the statutes of the towns / municipalities.

Official maps, as well as all geographical objects on official documents in Croatia are written in Croatian language and in Latin script. On the basis of the European (EuroRegionalMap, EuroGeoNames) and UN regulations (UNGEGN-United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names), the social and natural geographical objects need to be entered onto the official maps and in other official documents in the language and script of national minorities.

At the level of some cities / municipalities the Czech language and script, the Hungarian language and script, Ruthenian language and script, the Slovak language and script, Serbian language and Cyrillic script, and Italian language and script are used as second official language and script. Along with the Croatian language and script, languages and scripts of national minorities, as second official language and script are obligatory in 11 counties and in 55 cities / municipalities / villages.

At the level of certain cities / municipalities and the Law on Counties, Cities and Municipalities in the Republic of Croatia (NN 86/06) in which people belonging to national minorities are legally entitled to the official use of the language and script of their national minorities, the names of settlements are written bilingually.

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<sup>1</sup> The Croatian Constitution (NN 85/10)

<sup>2</sup> Constitutional Law on National Minorities, (NN 155/02).

## 2. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE USE OF LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT OF NATIONAL MINORITIES ON THE EXAMPLE OF GEOGRAPHIC OBJECTS

The Republic of Croatia (Croatia) is a newly established European country being independent, inseparable, democratic and social state (The Constitution). Croatia has the area of 56 542 km<sup>2</sup> and 4.43746 million inhabitants<sup>3</sup>.

According to the Croatian Constitution Croatian language and Latin alphabet (ISO-hrv)<sup>4</sup> are in the official use in the Republic of Croatia.

### 2.1. National minorities in Croatia

Migrations of the population throughout the history, caused by different motives, led to a greater concentration of ethnic groups in the area of today's Croatia. In the course of time it has come to the assimilation with the native population, but the roots that connect them historically, culturally and linguistically with the country of their origin have remained very much alive.

The Constitutional Law on National Minorities (Official Gazette 155/02) states that the citizens who are the members of other nations form a national minority in the Republic of Croatia. *A national minority is a group of Croatian citizens whose members have traditionally inhabited the territory of the Republic, and its members have ethnic, linguistic, cultural and / or religious characteristics different from other groups and guided by the wish to preserve these characteristics.*

There are altogether 22 national minorities and others living in the country (c. 331 383 citizens or 7.47%). One part of the population has not declared themselves in terms of ethnicity (c. 89 130 or 2.01%), while (c. 17 975 or 0.41%) remains unknown.

The most numerous representatives of national minorities are Serbs (c. 201 631 or 4.54%), followed by Bosniacs (c. 20 755 or 0.47%), Italians (19 636 or 0.44%), Hungarians (16 595 or 0.37%), Albanians (15 082 or 0.34%), Slovenians, 13 173 (0.30%), Czechs (10 510 or 0.24%), Romanies (c. 9463 or 0.21%), Macedonians (c. 4270, or 0.10%), Montenegrins (4926 c., or 0.11%), Slovaks (c. 4712 or 0.11%), Ukrainians (c. 1977 or 0.04 %), Ruthenians (c. 2337 or 0.05%), Germans (c. 2002 or 0.07%), Russians (c. 2337 or 0.02%), Austrians (c. 247 or 0.01%) Bulgarians (c. 331 or 0.01%), Polish (c. 567 or 0.01%), Romanians (c. 475 or 0.01%), Turks (c. 300 or 0.01%), Jews (c. 576 or 0.01%), Vlachs (c. 12 or 0.0%) and others (c. 21 801 or 0.41%)<sup>5</sup>.

### 2.2. Documents governing the rights of national minorities

The disintegration of Yugoslavia, the formation of new states, the strong demographic trends during and after the war altered the economic, ethnic, cultural, religious and other structures of the population in Croatia and other emerging countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Slovenia and Serbia). There were ethnic minorities at the time of Yugoslavia who were constituent people (Albanians, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Slovenes, Serbs), and according to the census taken in 2001, a part of Muslims declared themselves as Bosniacs).

<sup>3</sup> State Institute of Statistics, 2001. Census 2001

<sup>4</sup>United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, Technical reference manual for the standardization of geographical names, United Nations, New York, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Population by ethnicity, by towns / municipalities, Table 12, list 2001. DZS, 2001.

One of the prerequisites for international recognition of Croatia is that it should have the provisions about the freedom and the rights of national minorities incorporated into its legislation.

Therefore, the Constitutional Law on National Minorities (Official Gazette 155/02) was passed recognizing the freedom and the rights of all national minorities regulating as follows:

- *The Croatian Constitution,*
- *the principles of the Charter of the United Nations*
- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - the Final Act of the Organization for Security and Cooperation, the Paris Charter for a New Europe and other OSCE documents relating to human rights, particularly the Copenhagen Document of the OSCE meeting on human dimension and the Document of the OSCE Moscow Meeting on Human Dimension,*
- *Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and Protocols to the Convention*
- *the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination on the basis of religion or belief,*
- *the Convention on the Fight against Discrimination in Education,*
- *UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*
- *the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe*
- *the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*
- *the European Charter on local government*
- *SEI instruments for the protection of minority rights*
- *Lund Recommendation on the effective participation of national minorities in public life is committed to respecting and protecting minority rights and other fundamental rights and freedoms of man and citizen, the rule of law and all other highest values of its constitutional and international legal system, all its citizens.*

On the basis of the Constitution, the statutes were enacted for county cities / municipalities containing the provisions about the rights of national minorities.

### **2.3. Croatian Constitutional Act on regulating the rights of national minorities**

To ensure the realization of specific rights and freedom of persons belonging to national minorities, which they enjoy individually or together with other persons belonging to the same national minority, the Constitutional Law on National Minorities (Official Gazette 155/02) defines the following rights:

1. *Use their language and script, privately and in public use, and in official use;*
2. *Education in their own language and script they use;*
3. *Use their signs and symbols;*
4. *Cultural autonomy, official use of flags and symbols of national minorities and celebrating the holidays of national minorities, preservation of traditional names and signs, naming towns, streets, and the names of persons and events of importance for the history and culture*

*of ethnic minorities, and ensure the establishment of bilingual name settlements and traffic signs labels;*

*5. Religious freedom to practice their faith;*

*6. Media access units (publish newspapers, produce and broadcast radio and television);*

*7. Self-organization and association in order to achieve common interests;*

*8. Representation in representative and executive bodies of local self-government representation in the administration of local governments: the Republic of Croatia guarantees national minorities the right to be represented in the Croatian Parliament;*

*9. Participation in public life and administration of local affairs through the councils of national minorities;*

*10. Mayo Clinic Diet from any activity which endangers or may endanger their survival, the rights and freedoms.*

It is further defined that the languages and scripts used by members of national minorities are used officially by local government when members of the national minorities constitute at least a third of the population of such units.

#### **2.4. Law on the use of language and script of national minorities in Croatia**

Law on the Use of language and script of national minorities in the Republic of Croatia (NN 51/00) prescribes the manner and conditions of use of official languages and alphabets of national minorities. Thus, this Act regulates the conditions for the official use of languages and alphabets of national minorities to ensure equality with the Croatian language and Latin script in accordance with the law. It states furthermore the equal official use of language and script of national minorities in accordance with the provisions of the Constitutional Law on Human Rights and Freedoms and the Rights of Ethnic and National Minorities in Croatia providing that *members of a minority in the municipality or city make up the majority population, in accordance with the Constitutional Law on Human Rights and Freedoms and the Rights of Ethnic and National Minorities in Croatia, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe and this Act and under the following conditions:*

*1. when provided by international treaties to which Croatia is a party,*

*2. when they are prescribed by statute to cities and municipalities, in accordance with the Constitutional Law on Human Rights and Freedoms and the Rights of Ethnic and National Minorities in Croatia, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe and this Act,*

*3. when, in relation to the work of its bodies, the self-governing jurisdiction, the statute prescribed by the county in whose jurisdiction the individual municipalities and cities in equal official use of language and script of national minorities.*

Census data obtained before the regulation of these matters by the statute of the city / municipality are relevant to achieve equal official use of language and script of national minorities. In some cities / municipalities (e.g. city of Poreč) a total of 17 460 inhabitants lived there according to the census taken in 2001, out of which about 738 or 4.23%<sup>6</sup> are of Italian minority and there is no other minority represented in one third of the total population of the city / municipality, which would give them the right of equal use of their language and script.

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<sup>6</sup> Population by ethnicity, by towns / municipalities, Table 12, list 2001. DZS, 2001.

However, the Statute of the city / municipality passed the statutory decisions based on the acquired rights of autochthonous national minorities, the right of official use of their language and script, as well as other rights.

In the municipality of Gračac the situation is reversed. According to the census taken in 2001 there is a total population of 3923 inhabitants living there, out of which the Serbian national minority covers 1523 or 38.82% of inhabitants. According to the Constitutional law on the representation of minorities in one third of the total population of the city / municipality, the Serbian national minority has the right of equal use of their language and script and other rights. However, the statute of Gračac<sup>7</sup> has got the provisions on the protection of indigenous ethnic and cultural particularities of the national minority.

A similar situation is found in the municipality Plaški, where the Serbian national minority covers 45.99% of the total population of the municipality (1054 inhabitants from a total of 2292 inhabitants) and the statutes of the municipality do not incorporate provisions on equal official use of languages and scripts of the Serbian minority.

Constitutional Law and Law on the use of National Minorities, Article 5 provides that in the municipality, town or county the language and script of national minorities can be equally officially used:

- 1. in the work of representative and executive bodies of the municipality, city or county,*
- 2. in proceedings before administrative bodies, municipalities, cities or counties,*
- 3. in proceedings before state administrative bodies of first instance, the organizational units of central government bodies acting in the first instance, before the judicial bodies of first instance, prosecutors and the state attorney's offices of First Instance, notaries public and legal entities vested with public powers, which are authorized act on the territory of the municipality or city who are in equal official use of minority languages is introduced and a letter.*

In the cities and municipalities in which the equal official use of language and script of national minorities can be bilingual or multilingual, the following is written in the same size letters:

- 1. written road signs and other written signs in traffic,*
- 2. names of streets and squares,*
- 3. place names and geographic locations.*

## **2.5. Law on Education in the language and script of national minorities**

Pursuant to the Constitution, the Constitutional Law and the Law on languages and scripts of national minorities (NN 51/00), *members of national minorities have the right to education in the language of national minority to which they belong.* The same Act, Article 1 stipulates that *national minorities in Croatia have the right to education in their own language and script;* Article 2 stipulates that *education in the language and script of national minority in preschool, primary and secondary schools and other school facilities, as well as other forms of education (seminars, summer and winter schools, etc.).*

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<sup>7</sup> Statutes Gračac. Official Gazette of the Zadar County No. 9/10, Gračac, 11.12.2001

### 3. TERRITORIAL UNIT IN WHICH NATIONAL MINORITIES EXERCISE THE RIGHT TO USE THEIR LANGUAGE AND LETTERS

Along with the Croatian language and script, the language and script of national minorities, as the second official language and script, are prescribed to be used in 10 counties and in 54 towns / municipalities and 168 villages (Tables 1, 2 and 3): Bjelovarsko-bilogorska county (city / municipality - Daruvar, Končanica), Istria county (city / municipality - Bale, Brtonigla, Buje, Fažana, Funtana, Grožnjan, Kaštelir-Labinci, Pula, Motovun, Novigrad, Oprtalj, Poreč, Pula, Rovinj, Tar-Vabriga, Višnjan, Vižinada, Vodnjan and Vrsar), Karlovačka county (city / municipality-Krnjak Plaški and Vojnić), Ličko-senjska county (city / municipality- Donji Lapac, Udbina and Vrhovine), Osječko-baranjska county (city / municipality- Bilje, Darda, Ernestinovo, Jagodnjak, Kneževi Vinogradi, Našice, Petlovac, Punitovci and Šodolovci), Primorsko-goranska county (city / municipality-Cres, Rijeka and Vrbovsko), Sisačko-moslavačka county (city / municipality Gvozd and Dvor), Splitsko-dalmatinska county (city / municipality Vrlika), Šibensko-kninska county (city / municipality-diocese, Cijvljane, Ervenik and Kistanje) and Vukovarsko-srijemska county (city / municipality-Bogdanovci, Borovo, Markušica, Nijemci, Negoslavci, Tompojevci, Tordinci and Trpinja)(see Fig. 1).

Table 1 The frequency of official language and script national minority settlements

The frequency of official language and script national minority settlements					
Czech language	Hungarian language	Ruthenian language	Slovak language	Serbian language	Italian language
8 settlement	17 settlement	2 settlement	3 settlement	37 settlement	144 settlement

After examining the statutes of cities / municipalities in these cities / municipalities a large diversity in writing in the language and script of national minorities can be seen. Basically it refers to the regulation of bilingual writing the names of villages, squares and streets, signs in public institutions, local homes, schools and other institutions. However, in some cities / municipalities, although the statute guarantees the right to use the language and script of national minorities, it is not enforced. Some cities / municipalities statutes passed a decree, that the territory around the city / municipality uses the language and script of national minorities. Some cities / municipalities adopted a decree that the language and script of national minorities is used only in those settlements where the minority or the majority make one-third of the total population.

Although there is a mixed population living in certain areas, the persons belonging to national minorities have used their names for geographic inventory, both in the area in which they live and beyond. The best example is the municipality / village Kneževi Vinogradi using the Croatian language and Latin alphabet, Serbian language and Cyrillic alphabets, and Hungarian language and script officially on equal basis. In the Croatian population and the Serbian national minority the name of Kneževi Vinogradi is officially written both in Latin and Cyrillic alphabets. The members of the Hungarian minority use Hungarian Hercegszöllös names, written in Hungarian as the third official alphabet in the municipality. The name of the settlements Kneževi Vinograd is used in the vernacular local population, and Croats and members of the Hungarian and Serbian minority use the name Suljoš.

Unfortunately, there are no records, registers or any other form of collecting, updating and maintaining of the names in the languages and scripts of national minorities in Croatia referring to social and geographic objects. The new law that should be adopted by the state

from the European legislation framework will change the current regulations on the usage of the Croatian language on official documents.

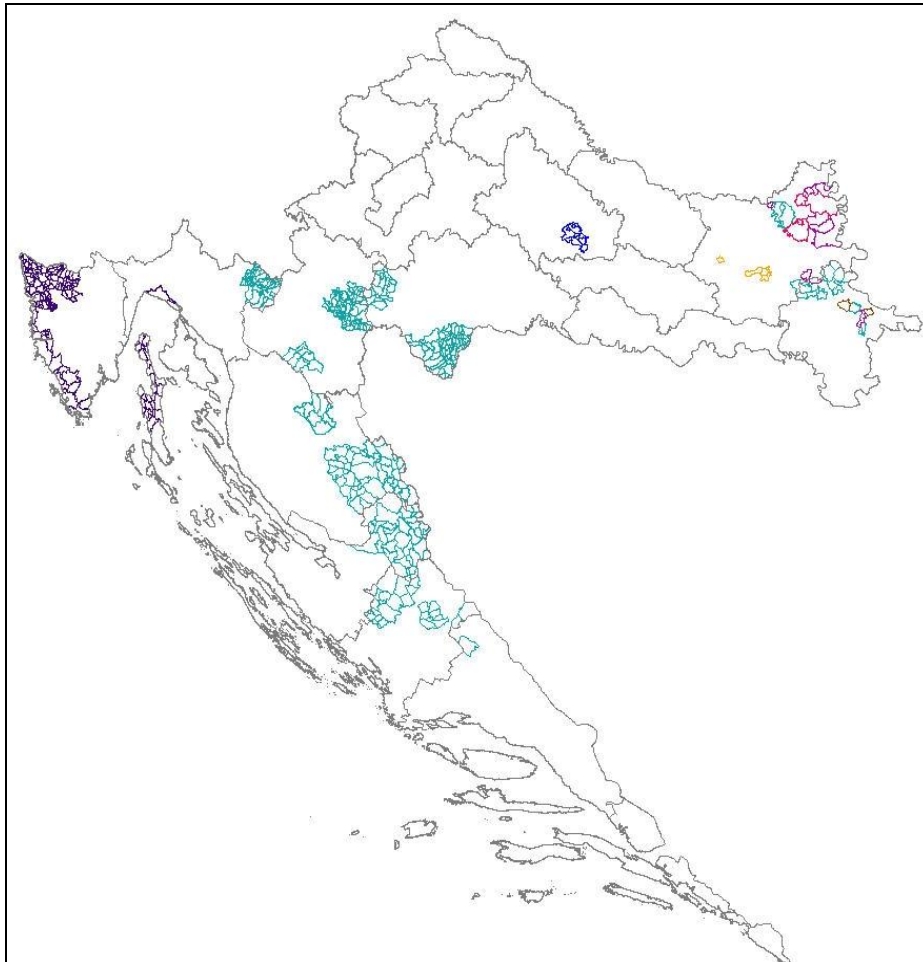


Figure 1. Territorial distribution of national minorities in Croatia.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The migration of population in the history, caused by different motives, led to a greater concentration of ethnic groups in the area of today's Croatia. In the course of time it has come to assimilation with the native population, but the roots that connect them historically, culturally and linguistically with the country of their origin have remained very strong.

According to Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in 2001, the members of the following ethnic minorities now live in Croatia: Albanians, Austrians, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, Czechs, Hungarians, Macedonians, Germans, Poles, Gypsies, Russians, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Slovenes, Serbs, Italians, Turks, Ukrainians, Vlachs, Jews and others (c. 331 383 or 7.47%).



One part of the population has not declared themselves in terms of ethnicity (c. 89 130 or 2.01%), while the rest is unknown (c. 17 975 or 0.41%).

In individual local units where Croatian language and Latin script are in official use, another language and the Cyrillic script or some other script can be introduced under the conditions prescribed by the law. The Constitutional Law stipulates that the equal official use of languages and scripts used by members of national minorities can be used by local government when members of a national minorities constitute at least a third of the population of such units (The Constitution, II Basic Provisions, Article 12, paragraph 1. NN 155/02). In some cases, when the minority has no legally prescribed number of its members, which guarantees them the right to language and script and other rights, it is defined in the Statute of the city / municipality. According to these data, the minorities in all counties are using their minority language and script, but in the counties listed below, the language and script of national minorities is the second official language and script along with the Croatian language and script: Bjelovarsko-bilogorske, Istarske, Karlovačke, Ličko-senjske, Osječko-baranjske, Primorsko-goranske, Sisačko-moslavačke, Splitsko-dalmatinske, Šibensko-kninske and Vukovarsko-srijemske county.

The importance of using language and script of national minorities is essential to preserve geographical toponymy inventory, especially in border areas, where there are social, economic, cultural, political and other differences between countries and populations. The same geographical object has several names very often originating from every national language. National minorities are often the majority population in these areas, therefore it is essential to preserve the language and script of national minorities for the purpose of recognizing the social and cultural identity of the area.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The last decade of 20th century was marked by political turmoil that led to the collapse of the socialist system in almost all countries in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Our country was a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Individual republics of the former state left the community, which along with the war that was imposed upon separate states including the Republic of Croatia, resulted in the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

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At the level of certain cities / municipalities and the Law on Counties, Cities and Municipalities in the Republic of Croatia (NN 86/06) in which people belonging to national minorities are legally entitled to the official use of the language and script of their national minorities, the names of settlements are written bilingually.

## **2. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE USE OF LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT OF NATIONAL MINORITIES ON THE EXAMPLE OF GEOGRAPHIC OBJECTS**

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On the basis of the Constitution, the statutes were enacted for county cities / municipalities containing the provisions about the rights of national minorities.

### **2.3. Croatian Constitutional Act on regulating the rights of national minorities**

To ensure the realization of specific rights and freedom of persons belonging to national minorities, which they enjoy individually or together with other persons belonging to the same national minority, the Constitutional Law on National Minorities (Official Gazette 155/02) defines the following rights:

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- 5. Religious freedom to practice their faith;*
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It is further defined that the languages and scripts used by members of national minorities are used officially by local government when members of the national minorities constitute at least a third of the population of such units.

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- 1. when provided by international treaties to which Croatia is a party,*
- 2. when they are prescribed by statute to cities and municipalities, in accordance with the Constitutional Law on Human Rights and Freedoms and the Rights of Ethnic and National Minorities in Croatia, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe and this Act,*

*3. when, in relation to the work of its bodies, the self-governing jurisdiction, the statute prescribed by the county in whose jurisdiction the individual municipalities and cities in equal official use of language and script of national minorities.*

Census data obtained before the regulation of these matters by the statute of the city / municipality are relevant to achieve equal official use of language and script of national minorities. In some cities / municipalities (e.g. city of Poreč) a total of 17 460 inhabitants lived there according to the census taken in 2001, out of which about 738 or 4.23%<sup>6</sup> are of Italian minority and there is no other minority represented in one third of the total population of the city / municipality, which would give them the right of equal use of their language and script. However, the Statute of the city / municipality passed the statutory decisions based on the acquired rights of autochthonous national minorities, the right of official use of their language and script, as well as other rights.

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<sup>6</sup> Population by ethnicity, by towns / municipalities, Table 12, list 2001. DZS, 2001.

In the municipality of Gračac the situation is reversed. According to the census taken in 2001 there is a total population of 3923 inhabitants living there, out of which the Serbian national minority covers 1523 or 38.82% of inhabitants. According to the Constitutional law on the representation of minorities in one third of the total population of the city / municipality, the Serbian national minority has the right of equal use of their language and script and other rights. However, the statute of Gračac<sup>7</sup> has got the provisions on the protection of indigenous ethnic and cultural particularities of the national minority.

A similar situation is found in the municipality Plaški, where the Serbian national minority covers 45.99% of the total population of the municipality (1054 inhabitants from a total of 2292 inhabitants) and the statutes of the municipality do not incorporate provisions on equal official use of languages and scripts of the Serbian minority.

Constitutional Law and Law on the use of National Minorities, Article 5 provides that in the municipality, town or county the language and script of national minorities can be equally officially used:

- 1. in the work of representative and executive bodies of the municipality, city or county,*
- 2. in proceedings before administrative bodies, municipalities, cities or counties,*
- 3. in proceedings before state administrative bodies of first instance, the organizational units of central government bodies acting in the first instance, before the judicial bodies of first instance, prosecutors and the state attorney's offices of First Instance, notaries public and legal entities vested with public powers, which are authorized act on the territory of the municipality or city who are in equal official use of minority languages is introduced and a letter.*

In the cities and municipalities in which the equal official use of language and script of national minorities can be bilingual or multilingual, the following is written in the same size letters:

- 1. written road signs and other written signs in traffic,*
- 2. names of streets and squares,*
- 3. place names and geographic locations.*

## **2.5. Law on Education in the language and script of national minorities**

Pursuant to the Constitution, the Constitutional Law and the Law on languages and scripts of national minorities (NN 51/00), *members of national minorities have the right to education in the language of national minority to which they belong*. The same Act, Article 1 stipulates that *national minorities in Croatia have the right to education in their own language and script*; Article 2 stipulates that education in the language and script of national minority in *preschool, primary and secondary schools and other school facilities, as well as other forms of education (seminars, summer and winter schools, etc.)*.

### 3. TERRITORIAL UNIT IN WHICH NATIONAL MINORITIES EXERCISE THE RIGHT TO USE THEIR LANGUAGE AND LETTERS

Along with the Croatian language and script, the language and script of national minorities, as the second official language and script, are prescribed to be used in 10 counties and in 54 towns / municipalities and 168 villages (Tables 1, 2 and 3): Bjelovarsko-bilogorska county (city / municipality - Daruvar, Reticle), Istria county (city / municipality - Bale, Brtonigla, Buje, Fažana, Funtana, Grožnjan, Kaštelir-Labinci, Pula, Motovun, Novigrad, Oprtalj, Poreč, Pula, Rovinj, Tar-Vabriga, Višnjan, Vižinada, Vodnjan and Vrsar), Karlovačka county (city / municipality-Krnjak Plaški and Vojnić), Ličko-senjska county (city / municipality- Donji

<sup>7</sup> Statutes Gračac. Official Gazette of the Zadar County No. 9/10, Gračac, 11.12.2001.

Lapac, Udbina and Vrhovine), Osječko-baranjska county (city / municipality- Bilje, Darda, Ernestinovo, Jagodnjak, Kneževi Vinogradi, Našice, Petlovac, Punitovci and Šodolovci), Primorsko-goranska county (city / municipality-Cres, Rijeka and Vrbovsko), Sisačko-moslavačka county (city / municipality Gvozd and Dvor), Splitsko-dalmatinska county (city / municipality Vrlika), Šibensko-kninska county (city / municipality-diocese, Civljane, Ervenik and Kistanje) and Vukovarsko-srijemska county (city / municipality-Bogdanovci, Borovo, Markušica, Nijemci, Negoslavci, Tompojevci, Tordinci and Trpinja)(see Fig. 1).

Table 1 The frequency of official language and script national minority settlements

The frequency of official language and script national minority settlements					
Czech language	Hungarian language	Ruthenian language	Slovak language	Serbian language	Italian language
8 settlement	17 settlement	2 settlement	3 settlement	37 settlement	144 settlement

After examining the statutes of cities / municipalities in these cities / municipalities a large diversity in writing in the language and script of national minorities can be seen. Basically it refers to the regulation of bilingual writing the names of villages, squares and streets, signs in public institutions, local homes, schools and other institutions. However, in some cities / municipalities, although the statute guarantees the right to use the language and script of national minorities, it is not enforced. Some cities / municipalities statutes passed a decree, that the territory around the city / municipality uses the language and script of national minorities. Some cities / municipalities adopted a decree that the language and script of national minorities is used only in those settlements where the minority or the majority make one-third of the total population.

Although there is a mixed population living in certain areas, the persons belonging to national minorities have used their names for geographic inventory, both in the area in which they live

and beyond. The best example is the municipality / village Kneževi Vinogradi using the Croatian language and Latin alphabet, Serbian language and Cyrillic alphabets, and Hungarian language and script officially on equal basis. In the Croatian population and the Serbian national minority the name of Kneževi Vinogradi is officially written both in Latin and Cyrillic alphabets. The members of the Hungarian minority use Hungarian Hercegszöllös names, written in Hungarian as the third official alphabet in the municipality. The name of the settlements Kneževi Vinograd is used in the vernacular local population, and Croats and members of the Hungarian and Serbian minority use the name Suljoš. Unfortunately, there are no records, registers or any other form of collecting, updating and maintaining of the names in the languages and scripts of national minorities in Croatia referring to social and geographic objects. The new law that should be adopted by the state from the European legislation framework will change the current regulations on the usage of the Croatian language on official documents.

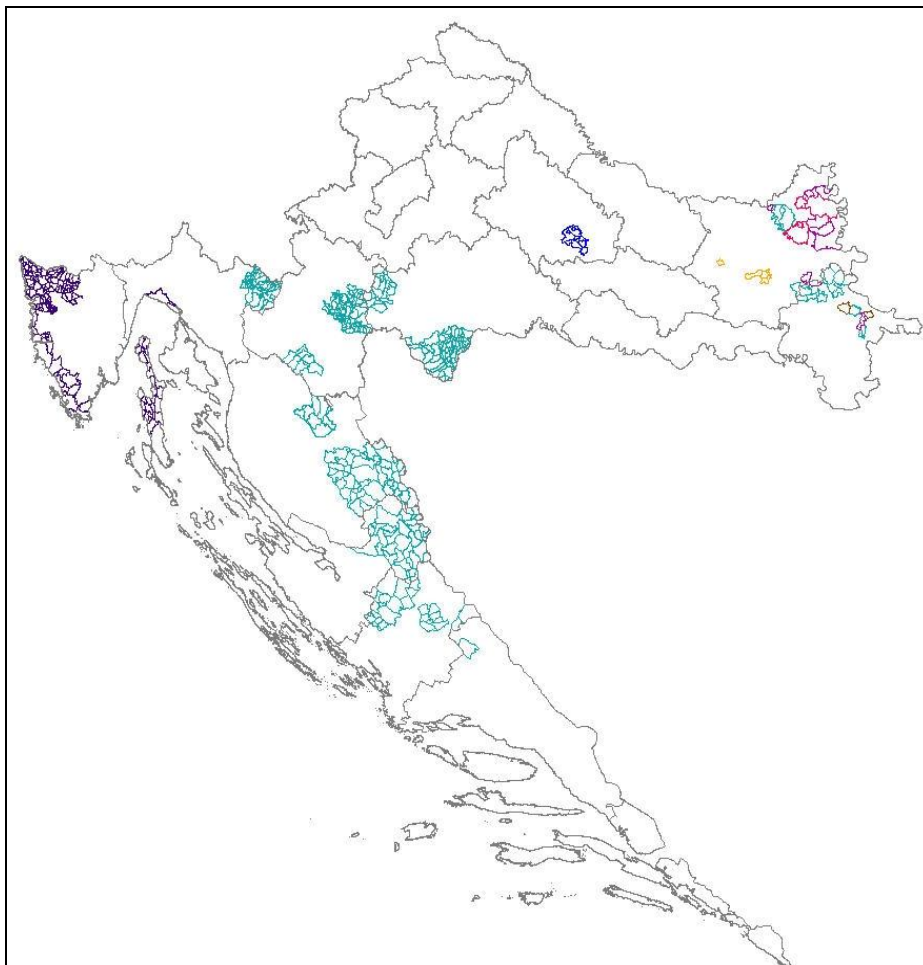


Figure 1. Territorial distribution of national minorities in Croatia.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The migration of population in the history, caused by different motives, led to a greater concentration of ethnic groups in the area of today's Croatia. In the course of time it has come to assimilation with the native population, but the roots that connect them historically, culturally and linguistically with the country of their origin have remained very strong.

According to Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in 2001, the members of the following ethnic minorities now live in Croatia: Albanians, Austrians, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, Czechs, Hungarians, Macedonians, Germans, Poles, Gypsies, Russians, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Slovenes, Serbs, Italians, Turks, Ukrainians, Vlachs, Jews and others (c. 331 383 or 7.47%). One part of the population has not declared themselves in terms of ethnicity (c. 89 130 or 2.01%), while the rest is unknown (c. 17 975 or 0.41%).

In individual local units where Croatian language and Latin script are in official use, another language and the Cyrillic script or some other script can be introduced under the conditions prescribed by the law. The Constitutional Law stipulates that the equal official use of languages and scripts used by members of national minorities can be used by local government when members of a national minorities constitute at least a third of the population of such units (The Constitution, II Basic Provisions, Article 12, paragraph 1. NN 155/02). In some cases, when the minority has no legally prescribed number of its members, which guarantees them the right to language and script and other rights, it is defined in the Statute of the city / municipality. According to these data, the minorities in all counties are using their minority language and script, but in the counties listed below, the language and script of national minorities is the second official language and script along with the Croatian language and script: Bjelovarsko-bilogorske, Istarske, Karlovačke, Ličko-senjske, Osječko-baranjske, Primorsko-goranske, Sisačko-moslavačke, Splitsko-dalmatinske, Šibensko-kninske and Vukovarsko-srijemske county.

The importance of using language and script of national minorities is essential to preserve geographical toponymy inventory, especially in border areas, where there are social, economic, cultural, political and other differences between countries and populations. The same geographical object has several names very often originating from every national language. National minorities are often the majority population in these areas, therefore it is essential to preserve the language and script of national minorities for the purpose of recognizing the social and cultural identity of the area.