



# **SWEDISH WINGS & CROATIAN ROOTS**

**STOCKHOLM & UPPSALA**

30 & 31 MAY 2025

The Embassy of the Republic of Croatia  
to the Kingdom of Sweden  
&  
Croatian National Tourist Board  
Office in Stockholm

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Dear Friends,

During my six years serving as Croatia's Ambassador to Sweden, I've had the privilege to meet an extraordinary number of Croatian professionals who have made impressive contributions to Swedish society, often without even knowing about each other. That quiet brilliance, hidden in plain sight, is what first inspired this gathering.

This booklet is not a conventional collection of biographies – it is a lively mosaic of journeys, laced with warmth, humor, and that unmistakable local pride that only we Croatians truly understand. Whether you come from the fertile plains of Slavonia and Vojvodina, the poetic hills of Zagorje, the sun-soaked shores of Dalmatia, the timeless diplomacy of Dubrovnik, the multicultural soul of Istria, the spirited energy of Primorje, or the green slopes of Bosnia and stone-rooted strength of Herzegovina – your stories reflect the astonishing depth and diversity of our shared heritage. And now, uplifted by Swedish wings, they form a constellation of talent that transcends borders.

It was after an informal gathering in March that the idea fully came to life: the real magic happens when we discover each other. I am especially grateful to my colleague and co-moderator, Mirna Vlašić Feketija, who first suggested that we build something similar to the Croatian-American professional network I supported while serving in the United States. Her spark helped bring this vision to reality.

Above all, I want to thank the 25 panelists – and every participant – for their enthusiasm, openness, and generosity. Many of you have become dear friends over the years, and I consider it one of the most rewarding parts of my diplomatic posting in Sweden.

Today, we are not just marking anniversaries – we are building a network. And perhaps, through this booklet and the connections it builds, we're creating a community that was simply waiting to meet itself.

Warmest regards,

**Dr. Siniša Grgić**  
Croatian Ambassador  
to Sweden and Latvia

# Swedish Wings & Croatian Roots

DAY ONE: Friday, 30 May 2025

## Swedish History Museum

Narvavägen 13-17, 114 84 Stockholm

08:45 **Registration**

09:00 **Conference** (*business attire*)

### Panel 1: Society

*Andrea Horvat Kramarić, Robert Mikulić, Dag Mislav Salaj,  
Slaven Španović, Diana Vukušić*

### Panel 2: Law & Politics

*Erik Domines, Tonka Frodlund, Roko Kursar,  
Robert Teklić, Davor Vuleta*

12:00 **Reception** marking the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Modern Croatian State (attended by all participants, Diplomatic Corps in Stockholm, and other distinguished guests);

**Keynote Speech** by Susanna Zeko

**Short Concert** by Marija Vidović (soprano) & Klapa Kaše

14:00 **Conference**

### Panel 3: Business

*Diana Banožić, Dario Idžaković, Robert Šteković,  
Rikard Utković, Susanna Zeko*

### Panel 4: Innovation & Science

*Katarina Gospić, Sandra Jerković Gulin, Danica Kragić Jensfelt,  
Michela Magaš, Dalibor Turina*

17:30 Free time

19:30 **Gala Dinner** at the Swedish History Museum

**Keynote Speech** by Danica Kragić Jensfelt

**Concert** by Marija Vidović (soprano) & Klapa Kaše  
(*black-tie, formal attire*)

# Swedish Wings & Croatian Roots

DAY TWO: Saturday, 31 May 2025

## Uppsala Castle

Slottet, 752 37 Uppsala

08:45 **Bus Drive to Uppsala**

*(gathering in front of the Scandic Anglais Hotel)*

10:30 **Conference** *(business attire)*

### Panel 5: Language of Art

*Antonia Dubravka Carnerud, Ivana Egić, Martina Tonejc,  
Sandra Vitaljić, Davor Zovko*

11:30 **Concert** by Tihomir Hojsak & Filip Novosel

12:30 **Reception** marking the 1100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Croatian Kingdom

14:00 **Uppsala Sightseeing**

16:00 **Bus Drive to Stockholm**

*(one bus will make stop at the Arlanda Airport)*

17:30 Free time

19:30 **After-Party** at the Croatian Residence *at the Ambassador's home  
(by invitation only, casual attire)*

**Note:** *As there will be many participants from Croatia and third countries, the conference will be conducted in Croatian and English, depending on the panelists' preference. No interpretation will be provided by the organizers.*



# Croats in Sweden

## A Story of Successful Integration, Cultural Heritage, and Enduring Bonds

The spring light illuminating the grand halls of Stockholm's Historiska Museet and Uppsala's historic castle does more than adorn ancient architecture – it highlights the remarkable faces of Croats who have intricately woven their lives between the Baltic and the Adriatic. For years their achievements – on Volvo's R&D floors, at Malmö's City Council benches, within KTH's robotics labs – exist as scattered constellations. The Embassy-curated gathering **“Swedish Wings & Croatian Roots”** unites these distinct lights into a cohesive firmament, marking the inception of a lasting, self-sustaining network of Croatian-Swedish professionals.

Our program draws inspiration from the tremendous success of the Association of Croatian American Professionals (ACAP), whose collaborative spirit and vibrant networking model has transformed the Croatian-American diaspora into a powerhouse of bilateral opportunity. We are honored to welcome distinguished ACAP representatives to share their experiences and insights, along with numerous guests from Croatia itself. The extraordinary interest this gathering generates among Croats worldwide testifies to our community's eagerness for greater connection and collaboration.

### *Historical Footsteps and Modern Realities*

The presence of Croats in Sweden first became significantly notable during the economic boom of the 1960s, spurred by bilateral labor accords with former Yugoslavia. Croatian workers filled assembly lines from Kiruna's mines in the far north to Gothenburg's shipyards in the southwest. A second, more urgent wave arrived in the 1990s, displaced by the traumatic Homeland War. Official records note approximately ten thousand Croatian-born residents in Sweden today, but the inclusion of descendants and Croats originating from Bosnia and Herzegovina raises community estimates to around forty thousand. Predominantly settled along the Malmö-Gothenburg axis and in Stockholm, this vibrant community engages actively in twenty-four cultural and sports societies under the Alliance of Croatian Societies in Sweden, sustains parish life in

Croatian Catholic missions, and ensures the Croatian language and culture thrive through schools and community activities.

### *From Individual Success to Collective Purpose*

The brochure you hold introduces twenty-five exceptional Croatian-Swedish professionals arranged in five thematic panels – Society, Law & Politics, Business, Innovation & Science, and Language of Art. Just as Croatia's iconic shield displays its twenty-five distinctive red and white fields in a unified pattern, our conference presents these twenty-five success stories as a cohesive symbol of Croatian achievement in Sweden.

Notably, the majority of our panelists are women, a fact that fills us with immense pride. This remarkable representation reflects both Croatia's strong tradition of female achievement and Sweden's exceptional environment for women's professional advancement. The prevalence of Croatian women excelling across diverse fields – from corporate leadership to scientific research, public administration to artistic innovation – testifies to the uniquely supportive ecosystem that Swedish society offers for female talent to flourish. Their success stories provide powerful inspiration for future generations of Croatian women in Sweden and beyond.

### *Society: Building Bridges Between Cultures*

The foundation of any thriving diaspora lies in its community leaders and social contributors. Andrea Horvat-Kramarić from Međimurje serves as Principal Expert at the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, bringing her multicultural perspective to critical public health communication. Robert Mikulić, born in Göteborg but with roots in Široki Brijeg, embodies dual identity – sacrificing Swedish comfort to defend Croatia in the 1990s before returning to become a vital cultural bridge. Dag Mislav Salaj applies his medical expertise to elderly care in Örebro while carrying forward his father's legacy as Minister in Croatia's first democratic government. Slaven Španović demonstrates remarkable adaptability, mastering Swedish and earning a prestigious acting nomination just years after relocating from Zagreb. Diana Vukušić, leading the Federation of Croatian Associations in Sweden since 2001, ensures the diaspora remains vibrant while educating Swedes about Croatian heritage.



### *Law & Politics: Shaping Civil Society*

Croatian voices bring unique perspectives to Swedish governance and jurisprudence. Erik Domines stands at the intersection of law, ethics, and innovation, blending his Zagreb and Karlobag heritage with Swedish corporate governance expertise. Tonka Frodlund channels her Dalmatian passion into decades of public service in Helsingborg's Social Democratic Party. Roko Kursar serves as Malmö's First Deputy Mayor, inspired by his grandfather's imprisonment on infamous island "Goli otok" during communism to champion freedoms for all Swedes. Robert Teklić combines judicial precision with diplomatic finesse in Southern Sweden's legal landscape, maintaining Split's rhythmic spirit in his negotiations. Davor Vuleta applies his Central Bosnian and Slavonian perspective to researching economic vulnerability at the Swedish Payment Enforcement Authority, bringing unique insight to migrant experiences.

### *Business: Entrepreneurial Excellence*

The Croatian business mindset – adaptable, resourceful, and creative – thrives in Sweden's structured environment. Diana Banožić brings Mediterranean creativity to her role as Vice President at Volvo Group, driving technological transformation with Croatian warmth and Swedish precision. Dario Idžaković has built an entrepreneurial legacy winning Sweden's prestigious Gazelle award four times, applying his Posavina family philosophy that "every step matters." Robert Šteković's remarkable ascent to Commercial Director at Lidl Sweden by age 32 demonstrates how Zagreb's blend of tradition and innovation translates perfectly to Nordic business. Rikard Utković directs Hewlett Packard Enterprise's North Europe operations while maintaining such deep connections to Zadar that he co-founded "Experience Croatia" to share his heritage with Swedes. Susanna Zeko became Secretary-General of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Sweden at just 30, bringing her Croatian inherited perspective on how "economic interdependence builds lasting peace."

### *Innovation & Science: Expanding Human Knowledge*

Croatian intellectual contributions have significantly advanced Swedish research and innovation. Katarina Gospić translates complex brain research into accessible insights, bringing Zadar's Mediterranean approach to neuroscience at Stockholm's Karolinska Institute. Sandra Jerković Gulin transformed her journey from a village near Zagreb to

becoming a respected dermatologist in Jönköping, extending her impact globally through research and podcasting. Danica Kragić Jensfelt, with roots in Rijeka, stands at the frontier of robotics and computer vision at KTH Royal Institute of Technology while serving on boards of Sweden's most influential institutions. Michela Magaš, awarded European Woman Innovator of the Year, embodies how growing up “at Rijeka's intersection of cultures taught me that innovation happens at the edges.” Dalibor Turina from Kraljevica directs Ericsson's patent portfolio, drawing parallels between coastal Croatian maritime trading and modern intellectual property strategies.

### *Language of Art: Cultural Expression*

The artistic dialogue between Croatian and Swedish cultures creates unique expressions and perspectives. Antonia Dubravka Carnerud weaves film stories that bridge Eastern and Northern Europe, bringing Croatian sensibilities to Scandinavian audiences throughout her four-decade career. Ivana Egić transforms Gotland's art community with her Mediterranean expressionism, noting the fascinating contrast between “Adriatic light and the distinctive northern luminosity.” Martina Juranović Tonejc applies her Zagreb art history expertise to Stockholm's cultural landscape, observing that “heritage isn't static but constantly reinterpreted through new cultural lenses.” Sandra Vitaljić's powerful photography explores collective memory and social justice, informed by growing up in Pula where “every landscape contains multiple narratives.” Davor Zovko, born in Mostar and now Sweden's State Herald, preserves Swedish heraldic traditions while expressing his Croatian soul through accomplished baritone performances.

### *Objectives Beyond a Single Weekend*

“Swedish Wings & Croatian Roots” transcends mere celebration – it launches a strategic initiative with ambitious objectives:

First, we aim to systematically map Croatian talent within Sweden, creating a dynamic, accessible network beneficial for mentoring students, guiding investors, and advising policymakers. This living directory serves as the foundation for ongoing collaboration and opportunity creation.

Second, the conference serves as an encouragement to establish a permanent, member-governed professional association – tentatively named the Association of Croatian-Swedish Professionals. This network

aspires to enhance professional opportunities, foster bilateral trade, and encourage collaborative research and innovation. The representatives of a similar network in the US (ACAP) joining us share invaluable insights on building and sustaining such an organization.

Third, the event underscores forward-looking bilateral collaboration. Concrete partnerships are envisioned, such as Swedish green-tech companies collaborating with renewable energy projects in Dalmatia, Croatian biomedical startups cooperating with Sweden's renowned Karolinska Institute, and heritage tourism from Visby to Vis revitalized through joint digital storytelling initiatives. These objectives represent our commitment to creating lasting bonds that benefit both nations.

### *Looking Ahead with Confidence*

The conference spans two historically significant milestones across its two host cities. The first day in Stockholm commemorates the thirty-fifth anniversary of Croatia's modern statehood, a vibrant affirmation of the country's enduring independence and identity. The following day in Uppsala celebrates the 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Croatia's earliest kingdom, reinforcing the continuum of Croatian cultural and historical identity.

We are especially grateful to the Honorable Governor of Uppsala, Mr. Stefan Attefall, and his wife, Mrs. Cecilia Hjort Attefall, for graciously opening the doors of their residence – the historic Uppsala Castle – to host our gathering. In line with tradition, the Governor resides in the castle while in office, and their generous support is a meaningful recognition of the importance of this group not only for Croatia, but for Sweden as well.

Across these two historic venues – Stockholm's Historiska Museet and Uppsala Castle – we establish a powerful platform for the Croatian community in Sweden to rise from hidden gem to unified chorus, significantly enhancing Croatian heritage's resonance within Sweden's innovative future. The extraordinary interest this event generates among Croats worldwide confirms we have struck a chord that resonates far beyond Swedish borders, creating connections that yield benefits for generations to come.

# Diana Banožić

**VP Foundational Products, Volvo Group**

📍 Gothenburg, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Tihaljina, Bosnia & Herzegovina



**Diana Banožić** has spent two decades navigating the intersections of technology and automotive innovation, emerging as a transformative leader within both Volvo Cars and Volvo Group. As Vice President within Digital, she spearheads the technical evolution that is reshaping one of Sweden's most iconic companies for a new era of mobility. Born in Gothenburg to Croatian parents, Diana embodies the fusion of Swedish precision and Mediterranean creativity in her leadership approach. Her career at Volvo began as an information architect before steadily advancing through increasingly strategic digital roles, culminating in her current executive position overseeing product creation and industrial digitalization.

Diana's leadership philosophy centers on creating collaborative environments where teams can excel. One of her defining achievements came during a critical product launch crisis when she assembled a cross-functional task force that revolutionized an approach to data-driven development. The initiative improved over 60 percent and earned the prestigious Volvo Cars Technology and Innovation Award.

As a servant leader with a master's degree in informatics, Diana excels at motivating teams while fostering psychological safety – skills that have proven essential in steering complex digital transformations. Her technical expertise is matched by her ability to translate technological capabilities into tangible business outcomes.

When reminiscing about her Croatian heritage, Diana speaks fondly of childhood summer road trips. “Traveling through Europe in a Volvo with my family to Croatia created memories I'm now recreating with my own children,” she shares. This connection remains so strong that when asked about her dream car, she mentions the Rimac Concept One electric supercar “because it is a symbol of modern Croatia” – a perfect metaphor for her own journey of bridging two cultures while driving toward an innovative future.

# Antonia Dubravka Carnerud

**Film Director**

📍 Stockholm, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Dubrovnik & Zagreb



**Antonia Dubravka Carnerud** weaves stories through film with the same intimate precision with which her two homelands – Croatia and Sweden – have shaped her artistic vision. Throughout her four-decade career in film business, she has established herself as a true cultural bridge between Eastern and Northern Europe, bringing Croatian sensibilities to Scandinavian audiences and vice versa.

Her impressive professional journey encompasses diverse roles – from independent producer and film director to sales agent and educator. This versatility propelled her to significant positions including manager of the EU's MEDIA Desk Sweden and adviser to Croatia's Ministry of Culture, where she played a pivotal role in connecting Croatian cinema to broader European networks.

Antonia's educational contributions have left an indelible mark on film studies across continents, from Stockholm's College of Graphic Design to Cuba's Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión. Her own multifaceted education – beginning at Zagreb's School of Fine Arts and expanding through prestigious institutions in France and Belgium – provides the foundation for her uniquely cosmopolitan approach to filmmaking.

Born in Zagreb but with roots reaching to the ancient stone walls of Dubrovnik through her paternal grandmother's distinguished family, Dubravka embodies the cultural richness of Croatia's diverse regions. Since 1980, she has called Sweden home, while maintaining deep connections to her birth country. In 1998, she received the City of Stockholm Cultural Award in recognition of her artistic contributions.

“I have lived in multicultural environments all my life; multiplicity and an ability to adapt to varying lifestyles have molded my existence. Working within the film business imposes flexibility and the ability to communicate and cooperate, as teamwork is at the very base of the profession.”

# Erik Domines

## Corporate Legal Executive

📍 Stockholm, Sweden

♥ Croatian origin: Primorje & Zagreb





**Erik Domines** stands at the intersection of law, ethics, and innovation. As an experienced in-house lawyer, he has built his career specializing in business law, ethics, and corporate governance for listed companies, with particular expertise in legal operations and organizational digitalization.

His professional journey spans international contexts, guiding companies through expansions and acquisitions primarily in the industrial sector. Beyond his corporate role, Erik's passion for legal education shines through his academic contributions, he authored and co-directs an advanced ethics course for lawyers at Stockholm University's Faculty of Law and has shared his expertise through classes at the Stockholm School for Entrepreneurship.

A natural leader and connector, Erik pioneered the business newspaper Dagens industri's annual General Counsels conference and previously headed training initiatives for the Swedish Association of In-house Lawyers. His dedication to governance extends to his current role as a board member and secretary at a foundation.

Though born and raised in Sweden, Erik carries the rich heritage of his Croatian parents who met in Stockholm in the 1950s. His family story reads like a fascinating historical novel – with roots stretching from the Zagorje highlands to the Primorje's coast of Karlobag. His maternal grandfather survived the notorious “Križni put” and managed the impressive feat of being imprisoned by three different regimes, while his paternal grandfather narrowly escaped priesthood, instead surviving a WWI Italian prison camp by scavenging from garbage dumps.

When asked about his connection to Croatia, Erik's eyes light up with the same intensity as the Adriatic sun, as he proudly recounts family tales passed down through generations – stories that blend the resilience of continental Croatian stubbornness with the poetic flair of coastal storytelling.

# Ivana Egić

## Visual Arts Educator

📍 Gotland Island, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Rijeka, Primorje



**Ivana Egić** brings a vibrant fusion of Mediterranean expressionism and Nordic sensibilities to Gotland's art community through her striking paintings and educational initiatives. Holding a Master's degree in Art Education from the Academy of Applied Arts at the University of Rijeka, she has established herself as a significant cultural bridge between Croatia and Sweden's largest island.

As the creative force behind EgaArt studio in Visby, Ivana has transformed her space into a center for art, creativity, and body positivity. Her expressive, colorist paintings primarily explore the female nude, examining the beauty, strength, and unique narratives embodied by women's forms. Through careful composition and bold technique, she invites viewers to engage with these stories in ways that celebrate diversity and self-acceptance.

Beyond her personal artistic practice, Ivana serves as a board member of "Öppna Ateljéer Gotland" (Open Studios Gotland) and belongs to the Swedish Artists' Association. Her dedication to enriching Gotland's cultural landscape extends to founding "Art čakula" (Art Conversation), an international project promoting fine art and connecting and supporting emerging and existing talents across the island with Croatia and its surrounding regions. This commitment earned her a scholarship from the Rotary Club Visby Silverhättan in 2020, recognizing her artistic contributions.

When reflecting on how her Croatian background influences her work in Sweden, Ivana often notes the fascinating contrast between the bright Adriatic light she grew up with and the distinctive northern luminosity of Gotland. "The island's limestone landscapes remind me of Dalmatia's karstic terrain," she observes, "yet the light here creates an entirely different palette – a beautiful metaphor for how we carry our origins into new environments."

# Tonka Frodlund

## Political Activist from Helsingborg

📍 Helsingborg, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Split, Dalmatia



**Tonka Frodlund** embodies the passion for social justice and community engagement that characterizes many who have found their political voice far from their homeland. As a dedicated member of Sweden's Social Democratic Party, she has devoted decades to public service in Helsingborg, serving in the city council since 2002 and taking on leadership roles including party chairperson and group leader in the Election Committee.

Her political journey springs from deeply held values that transcend national boundaries. "The desire to create a better society for everyone, better living and working conditions, the will to always be a fellow human being – that's what made me choose the Social Democrats," Tonka explains, highlighting how the party's platform aligns with her core principles of equality and solidarity. Though she stepped down as party chairperson in 2016 to achieve better work-life balance, Tonka maintained her commitment to public service through her continued work in the municipal council and social welfare committee, demonstrating her unwavering dedication to the community she serves.

Beyond politics, Tonka carries her Dalmatian heritage with unmistakable pride. Her spirited enthusiasm for Hajduk Split, the legendary football club from Croatia's coastal city, reveals the enduring connection she maintains with her Mediterranean roots. Friends describe her as possessing the quintessential Dalmatian combination of a generous heart and indomitable spirit – qualities that have served her well both in political arenas and personal relationships.

When discussions turn to her homeland, Tonka's eyes light up with the same intensity as the Adriatic sun. Her passionate temperament and straightforward approach to challenges reflect what she calls "the Dalmatian way" – facing life with unfiltered honesty, fierce loyalty, and an ever-present readiness to celebrate life's simple pleasures, whether in the council chambers of Helsingborg or reminiscing about the sunlit shores of Split.

# Katarina Gospić

**Brain Researcher and Entrepreneur**

📍 Stockholm, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Zadar, Dalmatia



**Katarina Anna-Maria Gospić** has established herself as one of Sweden's most prominent voices at the intersection of neuroscience and everyday decision-making. With a background spanning physiology, medicine, and cognitive neuroscience from the prestigious Karolinska Institute, she has translated complex brain research into accessible insights that help people understand how their minds work.

Though raised in Stockholm's Akalla district, Katarina's family roots stretch back to the ancient coastal city of Zadar on Dalmatian coast. This connection to Croatia's rich cultural heritage and the analytical mindset fostered in Sweden's academic environment have combined to shape her unique approach to science communication. Rather than pursuing medical practice after earning her degree in medicine in 2009, Katarina completed her PhD in cognitive neuroscience with a groundbreaking thesis on neuroeconomy – exploring how emotions function and what happens in the brain during decision-making. This work laid the foundation for her consulting business, Brainbow Labs, where she serves as an author, speaker, and consultant, helping organizations understand the neurological basis of human behavior.

Katarina has published eight books, including the popular science works “Choose Right! A Guide to Good Decisions” and “The Social Brain”. Her research with Martin Ingvar on humans' innate ability to react to injustices through amygdala activation has contributed significantly to our understanding of moral decision-making.

When reflecting on her Croatian heritage, Katarina often draws parallels between the Mediterranean approach to life and neurological well-being. “In Zadar, people understand instinctively what neuroscience has now proven – that social connection, sea air, and a moment to appreciate beauty are not luxuries but essentials for brain health,” she explains with the same clarity that has made her a sought-after presenter on Sweden's prestigious radio show *Sommar i P1* and television program *Sommarpratarna*.

# Andrea Horvat-Kramarić

**Principal Expert Policy Advice at ECDC**

📍 Stockholm, Sweden

♥ Croatian origin: Čakovec, Međimurje





**Andrea Horvat-Kramarić** navigates the intricate world of public health communication with the same precision and adaptability that characterizes her remarkable career journey. Recently promoted to Principal Expert Policy Advice at the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, she previously served as Head of Communication and Spokesperson, where she masterfully steered the organization's media strategy, risk communication, and corporate messaging through challenging global health crises.

Her professional path reflects a natural progression of expanding responsibilities. After honing her skills in Croatia's public administration as Head of Service for International Cooperation in Međimurje County, Andrea embarked on a decade-long tenure with the European Commission before bringing her expertise to Stockholm in 2019.

What sets Andrea apart is her multicultural educational background – a Master of Economy from the University of Zagreb paired with a Master of European Studies from Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, enriched by Chinese Studies at the National Taiwan Normal University. This diverse academic foundation enables her to approach complex policy issues with a global perspective while maintaining a distinctly European sensibility.

Though her career has taken her across Europe and Asia, Andrea's connection to her native Međimurje region remains undiminished. Born in Croatia's northernmost county – a verdant pocket of land embraced by the Mura and Drava rivers – she embodies the distinctive qualities of her homeland: pragmatic industriousness blended with intellectual curiosity. When asked about her birthplace, Andrea speaks of Međimurje with characteristic warmth. “We Međimurci are known for three things,” she often explains with a knowing smile. “Our diligence that borders on stubbornness, our melodious kajkavian dialect that even other Croatians struggle to understand, and our gibanica that somehow taste better than anywhere else in Croatia.”

# Dario Kristian Idžaković

**Business Leader and Entrepreneur**

📍 Malmö, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Posavina, Bosnia & Herzegovina



**Dario Kristian Idžaković** has built an impressive entrepreneurial legacy that stretches from southern Sweden to the Croatian coast. Under his visionary leadership, Ekstams Skåne AB has achieved the remarkable distinction of winning Sweden's prestigious Gazelle award four times – an honor bestowed on less than one percent of Swedish companies. This achievement, alongside multiple Nordic Growth Certificates, places his business among the top five percent of the fastest-growing and most stable companies across the Nordic region.

Through his holding company, Gillastig Holding AB, Dario has developed a business group that has grown organically into a multi-million-euro enterprise, employing approximately fifty staff and subcontractors. His success stems from a foundation of sound business logic, consistent quality, and unwavering commitment to clients and partners – values that have fostered trust and lasting relationships throughout his professional network.

His entrepreneurial vision extends beyond Scandinavia to Croatia, where his companies invest in and restore culturally significant buildings, including several UNESCO World Heritage sites on the island of Hvar. In these projects, he skillfully blends Scandinavian work structures with local traditions to create sustainable employment opportunities.

With roots in the Posavina region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dario brings a unique perspective to his business endeavors. His approach to leadership reflects lessons learned from his family's traditions: “My family has a long tradition of hunting and mountain trekking. From an early age, my father would remind me that the road to the top is never quick. You don't rush it. You respect it. Every step matters.”

This philosophy of patient progress and resilience has guided Dario's journey from immigrant roots to becoming one of southern Sweden's most successful entrepreneurs.

# Sandra Jerković Gulin

**Dermatologist and Medical Educator**

📍 Jönköping, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Zagreb



**Sandra Jerković Gulin**'s journey from a small village near Zagreb to becoming a respected dermatologist in Sweden exemplifies the power of dedication and continuous learning. Growing up on a Croatian farm, she developed the resilience and work ethic that would later define her distinguished medical career.

Her academic excellence was evident early on – she graduated from Zagreb's School of Medicine with honors, receiving both the Dean's Award and the National Top Scholarship for being Croatia's top student. This foundation led to a residency in Dermatology and Venereology at the University Hospital Center in Zagreb, followed by prestigious scholarships and fellowships across Europe that provided specialized training in dermato-oncology in Spain, Romania, Austria, and Germany.

Sandra's commitment to academic advancement culminated in a PhD in Biomedicine focusing on T-cell skin lymphoma and an MSc in Dermatology and Venereology. In 2020, she brought this wealth of knowledge to Sweden, where she now serves as a Consultant Dermatologist at Ryhov Länssjukhuset in Jönköping and an Adjunct Associate Professor and researcher at Linköping University.

Her research interests focus on groundbreaking work in Genital Lichen Sclerosus, virome studies, and penile and vulvar cancer. Sandra's impact extends beyond Europe – she participates in the Teacher Exchange Programme Erasmus in Eldoret, Kenya, where she teaches local students and provides dermatological care to underserved communities.

As co-host of the SkinScope Dermatology Podcast available on Spotify, Sandra shares her expertise with a global audience, discussing the latest developments in skin health with her British colleague. This combination of clinical excellence, research innovation, and educational commitment illustrates how she has transformed her rural Croatian beginnings into an international medical career that crosses borders and improves lives across continents.

# Martina Juranović Tonejc

**Artist and Author**

📍 Stockholm, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Zagreb



**Martina Juranović Tonejc** is an art historian, historian, and creative entrepreneur in Sweden. With a PhD in Art History from the University of Zadar, she has transformed her deep academic knowledge into practical applications that connect her Croatian homeland and Sweden.

Before establishing herself in Stockholm, Martina built an impressive career in Croatia's cultural heritage sector, serving as Head of the Documentation and Promotion of Cultural Heritage and EU Projects Department at the Ministry of Culture. Her research during this period was published in the book "The Institutional Development of the Protection of Movable Heritage from 1850 to 1990," particularly examining how political regimes influenced art preservation policies.

Her other publications, including "Images of Heritage - Between Documentation and Art" and "Travel Notes of Mijat Sabljari (1852-1854): Church Inventory," reflect her meticulous approach to cultural documentation. More recently, her research has turned toward future heritage studies, exploring how current approaches to preservation might evolve in response to climate change and political instability.

As founder and CEO of "i norr konst" AB in Stockholm, Martina now applies her expertise as an art consultant, helping clients navigate the intersection of artistic value and cultural significance. Her transition from academic researcher to creative entrepreneur exemplifies her ability to adapt historical knowledge to contemporary contexts.

When discussing her perspective on cultural preservation, Martina often draws from her Croatian heritage: "Growing up surrounded by layers of history taught me that heritage isn't static. It's constantly being reinterpreted through new cultural lenses, much like my own experience of bringing Croatian sensibilities to Swedish artistic contexts."

# Danica Kragić Jensfelt

**Professor of Robotics at KTH**

📍 Stockholm, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Rijeka, Primorje





**Danica Kragić Jensfelt** stands at the frontier where robots and humans converge, wielding an extraordinary influence that extends far beyond academia. As a Professor at KTH Royal Institute of Technology, she has transformed the field of robotics and computer vision while simultaneously serving on the boards of some of Sweden's most influential institutions – including SAAB, H&M, and FAM.

Her journey began in the coastal city of Rijeka, Croatia, where she earned her first degree in Mechanical Engineering before pursuing doctoral studies at KTH in Stockholm. This transition from the sun-soaked Adriatic to the technological powerhouse of Scandinavia mirrors her professional evolution from engineering fundamentals to pioneering AI research that shapes our future relationship with intelligent machines.

Danica's scientific accomplishments have earned her membership in both the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences, as well as prestigious research grants including an ERC Starting Grant and the Distinguished Professor Grant from the Swedish Research Council. As Director of the Centre for Autonomous Systems, she investigates how robots can better understand and interact with the world around them.

When asked about her Croatian roots, Danica often references the unique perspective her background provides. “Growing up in Rijeka, with its blend of Mediterranean warmth and industrial pragmatism, taught me to see technology not just as tools but as extensions of human creativity,” she explains with characteristic insight. “Perhaps that's why I've always believed robots should enhance human potential rather than replace it – a philosophy as deeply rooted in Croatian resourcefulness as it is in Swedish innovation.”

# Roko Kursar

**First Deputy Mayor of Malmö**

📍 Malmö, Sweden

♥ Croatian origin: Srima, Šibenik, Dalmatia



**Roko Kursar** embodies the ideals of social liberalism in both his political philosophy and his personal journey. As Malmö's First Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Disability Support, he has dedicated his career to creating what he calls "freedom for more" – a society where everyone, regardless of background or circumstances, has equal opportunities to shape their own destiny.

Before entering politics, Roko worked at the Swedish social insurance agency, where he witnessed firsthand how social safety nets can empower individuals during life's most challenging moments. This experience shaped his conviction that true liberty requires both personal freedom and collective responsibility – a balance he now champions as chair of Malmö's Functional Support Committee and the city's Disability Council.

Though born and raised in Malmö, Roko's roots stretch back to the small coastal village of Srima near Šibenik, Croatia. His family history bears the marks of Croatia's complex past as his grandfather endured imprisonment on the notorious Goli Otok, a barren island prison – a symbol of political repression. This family legacy has instilled in him a profound appreciation for democratic freedoms and human dignity that infuses his approach to governance.

"My grandfather's experience taught me that freedom is never guaranteed," Roko often reflects when discussing his political motivations. "From Croatia's shores to Malmö's diverse neighborhoods, I've learned that liberty must be actively protected and extended to everyone."

As a member of the University Board of Malmö University (appointed by the Swedish government) and through his previous service on numerous city councils and committees, Roko brings his historian's insight – honed through his bachelor's degree in history – to the challenges of building a more inclusive society. His leadership philosophy reflects both the resilient spirit of his Croatian heritage and the pragmatic progressivism of his Swedish upbringing.

# Michela Magaš

**Designer and Innovation Specialist**

📍 Umeå, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Zagreb and Rijeka, Primorje



**Michela Magaš** stands at the intersection of design, technology, and innovation, wielding influence across continents as one of Europe's most forward-thinking creative minds. As the first woman from the Creative Industries to receive the European Woman Innovator of the Year award, she has redefined the boundaries between artistic expression and technological advancement throughout her three-decade career.

Born in Zagreb, Croatia, and educated in Italian schools before studying design at London's prestigious Royal College of Art, Michela's cross-cultural perspective informs her unique approach to innovation. She carries the creative legacy of her parents – architects Olga and Boris Magaš – with particular pride in her father's renowned design of Split's iconic Poljud Stadium.

After shaping the global expansion of the Financial Times until 2000, Michela co-founded Stromatolite Design Innovation Lab, developing futures concepts for clients including Apple, Nike, and Nokia. She later founded MTF Labs, a global community platform connecting over 8,000 creative innovators and researchers.

Her expertise has earned her prestigious advisory roles to the European Commission, G7 leaders, and President von der Leyen's High Level Round Table for the New European Bauhaus. Though her career has taken her from the Adriatic coast to London and beyond, Michela has made her home in Umeå, northern Sweden, for the past ten years.

When asked about her Croatian heritage, she often references the unique perspective it provides: “Growing up in Rijeka, at the intersection of cultures, taught me to see boundaries as opportunities rather than limitations. It's where I learned that innovation happens at the edges – between disciplines, between cultures, between ways of thinking.”

# Robert Mikulić

## War Veteran & Cultural Ambassador

📍 Gothenburg, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Široki Brijeg, Bosnia & Herzegovina



**Robert Mikulić** has bridged two worlds throughout his life – the comfortable security of Sweden and the fierce loyalty to Croatia that ultimately led him to wartime heroism. Born in Göteborg in 1969 to Croatian emigrant parents, he grew up amid Sweden's Croatian diaspora while his father and uncle maintained strong political activism for Croatian independence.

This dual identity took dramatic form in 1991 when Robert, then a successful young entrepreneur with a comfortable life in Sweden, made the fateful decision to join thousands of diaspora Croatians returning to defend their ancestral homeland. Enlisting with the elite Tigers brigade (ZNG), he was deployed to the strategically crucial area of Hrvatska Kostajnica, where his unit was captured by the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA).

During his 58-day imprisonment in the notorious Manjača camp, he concealed his Swedish connections to avoid additional persecution, knowing his father was a prominent Croatian emigrant. His fluent English made him the spokesman for fellow prisoners during International Red Cross visits and media interviews, raising awareness about their dire conditions.

After his release in a prisoner exchange, Robert briefly returned to Sweden before rejoining Croatia's defense forces. His commitment extended to neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he fought with the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) before returning to Sweden as a 30% disabled war veteran.

Today, Robert has returned to entrepreneurial success in Sweden while remaining deeply connected to the Croatian community. Having recently stepped down as president of Velebit Croatian Society in Göteborg – the same organization once led by his uncle Stipe Mikulić, who was assassinated for his political activities in 1975 – he continues as an influential mentor to the next generation of Croatian-Swedish leaders.

# Dag Mislav Salaj

**Senior Physician for Geriatric Care**

📍 Örebro, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Zagreb





**Dag Mislav Salaj** has dedicated his medical career to the care and dignity of Sweden's most vulnerable elderly patients. Currently serving as the regional elderly care physician of the Örebro region, he applies his extensive medical knowledge to the complex challenges of geriatric medicine, addressing critical issues like pressure ulcers and palliative care needs.

His journey in medicine began at the Karolinska Institute, where he earned his medical degree in 1999 and later completed his Master of Dementia studies in 2015. He recently returned to Karolinska as an affiliated researcher, focusing on palliative care research with an emphasis on equitable healthcare within Peter Strang's research group.

Though born and raised in Sweden, Dag Mislav carries a profound connection to his Croatian heritage through his late father Branko Salaj, who served as Minister of Information in Croatia's first democratic Government of National Unity during the early 1990s Homeland War. His father's decision to return to Croatia during this pivotal historical moment instilled in Dag Mislav a deep appreciation for both civic duty and cultural identity.

The Salaj family originates from Western Slavonia, though his father maintained strong connections to Zagreb. This dual heritage has shaped Dag Mislav's approach to medicine, combining Swedish methodical precision with a Croatian ethos of resilience and compassion.

In professional settings, Dag Mislav is known for his straightforward approach to healthcare challenges and his belief that the key to improving elderly care is building trust and foundations for collaboration between different healthcare actors. "We know the emergency room stretcher is the single biggest factor behind the emergence of pressure ulcers," he noted when addressing systemic issues in geriatric care.

# Slaven Španović

**Actor**

📍 Västerås, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Srijem, Vojvodina



**Slaven Španović** embodies the spirit of transformation, seamlessly bridging the vibrant theatrical worlds of Croatia and Sweden with passion and versatility. Born in Sremska Mitrovica in Vojvodina, Slaven's artistic journey began in earnest when he moved to Zagreb to study at the prestigious Academy of Dramatic Arts in 2007. After graduating in 2012, he quickly rose to prominence, capturing national attention with his captivating performance in the acclaimed play *Plemena*, earning him the distinguished Croatian Award for Best Young Actor in 2013.

His momentum continued as he delivered an unforgettable performance in the Croatian war drama “Broj 55”, directed by Kristijan Milić. The film dominated the 2014 Pula Film Festival, receiving an unprecedented eight Golden Arena awards – including Best Film – further cementing Slaven’s reputation as a dynamic talent. He soon became a household name across Croatia, notably through his leading role in the beloved television series “Vatre ivanjske”.

In 2016, after accumulating experience through diverse roles across 14 stage productions at Zagreb's celebrated Komedija Theatre, Slaven bravely embarked on a new artistic chapter by relocating to Sweden. Demonstrating exceptional adaptability and determination, he mastered the Swedish language swiftly, astonishing audiences by performing on stage in Uppsala City Theatre after just two months. His critically praised performance in the Stockholm Playhouse Theatre production “Ljudska tajna” in 2019 secured him a prestigious nomination for Best Actor, marking another career milestone.

Slaven has since expanded his international presence, most notably appearing in the Finnish film “Omerta 6/12” on Netflix. Today, as a thriving member of Sweden’s vibrant cultural scene, he often humorously credits his resilience to his upbringing near the banks of the Danube in Srijem: “Growing up by the river taught me adaptability – whether navigating currents or new languages, you just have to dive in wholeheartedly.”

# Robert Šteković

**Commercial Director at Lidl Sweden**

📍 Stockholm, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Zagreb



**Robert Šteković** has rapidly ascended through the ranks of European retail leadership to become Commercial Director at Lidl Sweden, bringing his multicultural background and international expertise to one of Scandinavia's most dynamic grocery chains. At just 32 years old when appointed to Lidl Sweden's executive team in 2020, he had already demonstrated exceptional commercial acumen across four different Lidl markets throughout Europe.

His professional journey began with hospitality training at Zürich Marriott Hotel followed by marketing roles at the Croatian National Tourist Board in Zurich and Swiss Education Group. This foundation in hospitality and marketing proved valuable when he joined Lidl Croatia as an Executive Consultant in Purchasing in 2011, launching a meteoric rise through the organization that would take him from Croatia to Lidl International as Purchasing Director for Brands, then to Sweden and Denmark in senior leadership positions. Robert's educational background reflects his international outlook – a Bachelor of Business Administration from Northwood University and a Swiss BBA in International Hotel Management from Hotel Institute Montreux, built upon the linguistic foundation of his bilingual German-Croatian education at Zagreb's XVIII Grammar School.

Under his commercial leadership, Lidl Sweden continues to expand its Swedish and ecological product assortment, with a particular focus on the popular fruit and vegetable category where nearly 20 percent of the offerings are organic and approximately 30 percent of the overall product range comes from Swedish suppliers.

Born in Zagreb, Croatia, Robert brings a distinctive Central European sensibility to his Nordic business environment. When asked about his Croatian heritage, he notes with characteristic enthusiasm, “Zagreb taught me how to blend tradition with innovation – a balance we strive for in our product selection at Lidl. The cultural diversity I experienced growing up helps me understand different markets and consumer preferences across Europe.”

# Robert Teklić

**Attorney-at-Law**

📁 Malmö, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Split, Dalmatia



**Robert Teklić** embodies the perfect blend of judicial precision and diplomatic finesse. With an impressive legal career spanning several decades, he has established himself as a cornerstone of the Swedish legal landscape, particularly in Southern Sweden. His academic journey took him from the University of Lund, where he earned both his LL.B. and LL.M., to the prestigious University of Illinois as a Nordberg Fellowship recipient. This educational foundation launched him into a distinguished career that includes founding multiple law firms, serving as Nordic Chief Legal Officer for public companies, and acting as legal counsel in Brussels for the Chamber of Commerce of Southern Sweden.

A natural entrepreneur with a keen business sense, Robert has balanced his roles between founding partner at ATCO.LAW Advokatbyrå and executive positions where his strategic mind helped navigate complex corporate challenges. His expertise spans both traditional legal practice and modern corporate governance, making him a sought-after advisor in international business circles.

Though he arrived in Sweden as an infant in 1966, Robert has maintained a profound connection to his Croatian roots. When speaking of his birthplace – Split, Robert's voice takes on the melodious rhythm of the Dalmatian coast. "Split isn't just a city," he often says with a smile that reaches his eyes, "it's a state of mind – where the stones of Diocletian's Palace have absorbed more history than most history books contain."

Robert navigates between Swedish pragmatism and Croatian passion with the same ease he switches between the three languages he speaks fluently. Friends joke that his negotiation skills were honed not in law school but while mediating heated discussions about whether Hajduk Split would ever reclaim its former glory – a debate he engages in with diplomatic tact and the passionate conviction of a true Dalmatian.

# Dalibor Turina

**Patent Portfolio Director at Ericsson**

📍 Stockholm, Sweden

♥ Croatian origin: Kraljevica, Primorje





**Dalibor Turina** navigates the complex world of intellectual property with the same precision and strategic foresight that defines his career at Ericsson. As Director of Patent Portfolio Management, he orchestrates the company's defensive IPR strategies, manages IPR terms in commercial agreements, and oversees risk management across one of the technology sector's most valuable patent portfolios. His three-decade journey at Ericsson has been marked by remarkable versatility, building cross-functional expertise spanning standardization, research and innovation, technology strategies, product management, and line management before joining the IPR & Licensing department in 2012. This comprehensive understanding of both technical and commercial aspects of telecommunications has made him an invaluable asset in protecting and monetizing Ericsson's intellectual property assets.

Though his professional life is rooted in Sweden, Dalibor's heritage traces back to Croatia's northern Adriatic coast. The Turina family name originates from Kraljevica, with strong historical presence in the coastal cities of Rijeka and Senj – where in the village of Biljevine, every fourth resident once shared this distinctive surname. Beyond the corporate world, Dalibor maintains his connection to both technical precision and competitive spirit as an active tennis player and board member at Näsbypark Tennis Club, one of Stockholm's most prestigious tennis establishments. When he speaks of his Croatian coastal origins, Dalibor often draws parallels between the strategic thinking required in patent management and the maritime trading traditions of his ancestral region.

“Growing up with stories of my family from Kraljevica and the Kvarner Bay,” he explains, “I learned how coastal Croatians had to be both protective of their assets and strategic in their ventures – much like what we do in modern patent portfolio management.” This blend of Adriatic heritage and Swedish corporate expertise has shaped him into a respected leader in the international intellectual property landscape.

# Rikard Utković

**Director, HPE North Europe**

📍 Stockholm, Sweden

♥ Croatian origin: Zadar, Dalmatia



**Rikard Utković** embodies the perfect synthesis of Swedish business pragmatism and Croatian entrepreneurial spirit in his role as director of Hewlett Packard Enterprise's North Europe Channel Region. Overseeing operations across 14 countries with over 2,500 partners and generating hundreds of millions in revenue, he has established himself as a transformative leader in the technology sector. His professional journey from Gothenburg to Stockholm has been marked by consistent achievement, earning prestigious recognitions including the Winners Summit, Top 100 Club, and President Club within HPE. These accolades reflect his exceptional ability to lead high-stakes global pursuits and build successful teams across diverse markets.

Beyond his corporate accomplishments, Rikard serves on multiple boards, including SALK, Sweden's largest tennis club. He regularly shares his leadership insights through lectures and mentoring, with particular focus on supporting young Croatian professionals in the technology sector. His Croatian roots run deep through his father's lineage, tracing back to a farming family near Zadar. At just three months old, Rikard made his first journey to Croatia – a connection he maintains through annual visits to the family homes he has established there.

This profound attachment to his heritage inspired Rikard to co-found “Experience Croatia,” a travel agency that has introduced thousands of Swedes to Croatia's cultural riches. His community leadership extended to revitalizing Croatian associations in Stockholm, where he served as vice president of the Matija Gubec organization, helping unify the diaspora community.

“My father's journey from Zadar's farmlands to Gothenburg shaped my understanding of perseverance,” Rikard reflects. “In business, I've found that the Croatian tradition of genuine hospitality translates perfectly to building relationships in the corporate world.”

# Sandra Vitaljić

**Photographer and Educator**

📍 Stockholm, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Pula, Istria



**Sandra Vitaljić** works at the intersection of documentary and conceptual photography, blending factual narrative with artistic interpretation to create visually compelling and thought-provoking work. Holding an MFA and a doctorate in photography from Prague's renowned Academy of Performing Arts, Film and TV (FAMU), she has established herself as both a creator and critical thinker in contemporary photography, with a particular focus on collective memory, domestic violence, and the often-overlooked experiences of women immigrants.

Her artistic vision has earned international recognition, with exhibitions at leading institutions including Vienna's mumok and Berlin's Kunstquartier Bethanien. Beyond her creative practice, Sandra has made significant contributions to photography theory through her book "War of Images - Contemporary War Photography" and through curatorial projects that examine conflict photography and the ethics of representation. For fifteen years, Sandra helped shape Croatia's next generation of photographers as a professor at the Academy of Performing Arts in Zagreb, where she played a pivotal role in establishing and developing the Department of Photography.

Born and raised in the ancient city of Pula on Croatia's Istrian peninsula, Sandra's connection to the Adriatic runs deep. Her father Franko's roots stretch to the island of Vis, specifically to the fishing town of Komiža, known for its distinctive dialect and maritime traditions. After her studies in Prague (1991-96), she made Zagreb her home until relocating to Stockholm with her family in 2019.

Now based in Stockholm, Sandra remains engaged in both the Nordic and international photography communities, continuing to explore the intersections of image, memory, and representation. Reflecting on her evolving practice, she notes, "Every landscape contains multiple narratives – some visible, others waiting for the right light to reveal them." This perspective guides her approach to connecting with new environments, using photography as a tool to uncover layered histories and unseen dimensions within them.

# Diana Vukušić

**Leader of Croatian Societies in Sweden**

📍 Gothenburg, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Šestanovac, Dalmatia



**Diana Vukušić** bridges cultural divides as the influential president of the Federation of Croatian Associations in Sweden, a position she has held with distinction since 2001. While professionally serving as a Financial Controller at the Swedish Prison and Probation Service in Gothenburg, her true passion lies in strengthening the bonds between her two homelands.

Born and raised in Sweden to parents who fled former Yugoslavia, Diana embodies the successful integration of Croatian heritage with Swedish identity. Her leadership of the Croatian federation coincided with pivotal moments in Croatia's modern history, and she has used her platform to educate Swedes about Croatian culture and socioeconomic realities while simultaneously keeping the Croatian diaspora connected to their roots. Diana's astute cultural insights regularly appear in Swedish media, particularly during moments of national significance for Croatia. During Croatia's historic run to the 2018 World Cup final, she articulated how the team's success represented more than athletic achievement: "It creates unity and joy... a belief that anything is possible if you want it," she explained, noting how the tournament had revitalized national self-confidence during challenging economic times.

Her analyses of Croatian affairs reflect both emotional connection and scholarly understanding. "Croatia has had a tough road to independence, especially considering the bloody war of aggression when breaking free from Yugoslavia," she observes, demonstrating her ability to contextualize contemporary events within broader historical narratives.

Though now firmly established in Sweden's Gothenburg region, Diana maintains deep ties to her Dalmatian heritage. When speaking of her family's coastal origins, her voice takes on the melodic inflection characteristic of Croatia's sun-drenched shores. "Dalmatians carry the sea in their soul," she often remarks with a smile. "Even those of us who grew up beside the North Sea rather than the Adriatic – we still feel that pull toward our ancestral waters."

# Davor Vuleta

**Economic Researcher at Kronofogden**

📍 Kristianstad, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Slavonia and Bosnia & Herzegovina





**Davor Vuleta** applies his multidisciplinary expertise to some of Sweden's most pressing socioeconomic challenges at Kronofogden, the Swedish Payment Enforcement Authority, where he has worked since 2007. After serving as an inspector for six years, he now serves as the agency's spokesperson, highlighting critical issues related to indebtedness in society with particular focus on the role of legislation and its impact on individuals' financial situations.

His academic journey culminated in a Ph.D. in Sociology of Law from Lund University, with his 2022 dissertation, "Law and Social Exclusion: The functions and dysfunctions of the Swedish legal system in light of overindebtedness among immigrants," examining how the Swedish legal system impacts the economic security of overindebted migrants. This groundbreaking research analyzed both top-down processes – how laws and legal institutions affect individuals – and bottom-up processes, exploring how individuals' legal culture and perceptions of Swedish laws influence their economic behaviors.

Davor's published research provides crucial insights by merging enforcement data with socioeconomic statistics. His work aims to develop effective tools for reducing over-indebtedness and strengthening economic security across Swedish society, while raising awareness and developing strategies to prevent financial problems through informed legislative changes.

With a father from Busovača in Central Bosnia and a mother from Posavina, Davor's family roots trace back to the village of Vulete in Dalmatia – a name that according to family lore may have French origins dating to Napoleon's campaigns. This rich heritage brings a nuanced perspective to his research on migration and economic vulnerability. "In my family traditions," he explains, "economic security isn't just about laws or resources – it's about community networks and the knowledge passed down through generations."

# Susanna Zeko

**Director, ICC Sweden**

📍 Stockholm, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Uskoplje, Bosnia & Herzegovina



**Susanna Zeko** embodies the modern fusion of diplomatic finesse and principled leadership as the Secretary General of ICC Sweden, guiding this century-old organization into a new era of global commerce. At just 30 years old when appointed in 2019, she became only the second woman to lead the Swedish branch of the International Chamber of Commerce in its hundred-year history, a milestone that reflects both her exceptional capabilities and the organization's evolving vision.

Her professional journey reveals a deep commitment to sustainable business practices and international cooperation. Before taking the helm at ICC, Susanna honed her expertise as head of sustainable business strategies at The New Division, following six impactful years as policy manager at ICC Sweden. Her leadership extends beyond national borders – she previously chaired the Nordic network of the UN Global Compact, the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative.

Recognized as one of “Future Female Leaders” and listed among Sweden's foremost sustainability profiles, Susanna brings a forward-thinking perspective to the challenges of global trade. Her appointment came at a critical juncture, as she notes: “When trade wars, protectionism, and increased populism threaten the important benefits that globalization and liberalization of markets bring worldwide – those of us who believe in openness must act!”

Born to Croatian parents from Central Bosnia, Susanna carries the resilient spirit of her family heritage into her work advocating for open markets and ethical commerce. When speaking of her background, she often reflects on how her Bosnian Croatian roots have shaped her perspective on international cooperation. “Growing up with stories of a divided region taught me that economic interdependence isn't just about prosperity – it's fundamental to building lasting peace,” she explains with quiet conviction, embodying the ICC's founding principle that business relationships across borders help prevent conflicts between nations.

# Davor Zovko

**State Herald & Baritone Singer**

📍 Eskilstuna, Sweden

♡ Croatian origin: Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina



**Davor Zovko** is a multifaceted professional whose career seamlessly intertwines art, public service, and music. Born in Mostar in 1965, Davor's early exposure to the rich cultural tapestry of his hometown laid the foundation for his diverse pursuits.

In 2022, Davor was appointed as the State Herald (Statsheraldiker) of Sweden, becoming the fourteenth individual to hold this prestigious position since its formal establishment in 1734. In this role, he oversees the design and regulation of official heraldic symbols, ensuring the preservation and evolution of Sweden's heraldic traditions.

Beyond his heraldic responsibilities, Davor is an accomplished baritone singer. His musical talents have been recognized in various performances, reflecting his deep appreciation for the arts and his commitment to cultural expression.

Davor's dedication to public service is evident in his extensive experience within Sweden's public administration. He has conducted significant research in social sciences, focusing on program evaluation and public sector effectiveness. His scholarly work includes studies on the Swedish Public Employment Service, emphasizing the importance of evaluation in organizational development.

A passionate advocate for heraldry, Davor has contributed to numerous publications and lectures, aiming to educate and inspire interest in heraldic art and history. His unique blend of artistic sensibility, administrative expertise, and musical talent positions him as a prominent figure in both Swedish and Croatian cultural landscapes.

# **SWEDISH WINGS & CROATIAN ROOTS**

## **The Untold Story of Croatian Talent in Sweden**

This unique publication celebrates the inspiring journeys of 25 distinguished Croatian-Swedish professionals - innovators, leaders, artists, scientists, and entrepreneurs - who embody the best of both worlds. Their lives, woven between the Adriatic and the Baltic, reveal a remarkable story of integration, resilience, and achievement.

Marking both the 35th anniversary of modern Croatian statehood and the 1100th anniversary of the Croatian Kingdom, the two-day gathering in Stockholm and Uppsala brought together an extraordinary constellation of individuals for the very first time. More than a brochure, this edition is a living tribute to identity and opportunity - a snapshot of a vibrant, Croatian-Swedish professional community finally discovering itself.

This booklet offers a compelling portrait of the Croatian spirit - proudly rooted, and always ready to fly.