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## **(ARCHIVAL) RECORDS ACQUISITION PROCEDURE OF THE CROATIAN MEMORIAL AND DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF THE HOMELAND WAR AND COOPERATION WITH PUBLIC AND STATE INSTITUTIONS AND NGO'S**

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### **Abstract:**

*The paper deals with the Croatian Memorial and Documentation Centre's procedure and praxis of the acquisition of the archival records from the archives, public and state institutions, non-governmental organizations and with various forms of cooperation with these institutions. Through several examples from praxis, the authors describe the importance, models and the results of the cooperation using literature and sources - primarily the Center's annual activity reports. The Center has established cooperation with various related institutions so far for a more efficient execution of its planned tasks. Experiences and the methodology of that cooperation will be analyzed in the paper.*

### **Key words:**

*Archival records acquisition, Croatian Memorial and Documentation Center of the Homeland War, specialized archives, cooperation, institutions*

### **Izvleček:**

**Prezemanje (arhivskega) gradiva v Hrvatskem spominskem in dokumentacijskem centru domovinske vojne in sodelovanje z javnimi institucijami ter nevladnimi organizacijami**

*Prispevek se ukvarja s postopkom in prakso prevzemanja arhivskega gradiva od arhivov in ostalih javnih ustanov ter nevladnih organizacij v Hrvatski spominski in dokumentacijski center domovinske vojne. S pomočjo primerov iz prakse in ob uporabi relevantne literature in virov (predvsem letnih poročil Centra) avtorici opisujeta pomembnost, modele in rezultate sodelovanja z različnimi sorodnimi institucijami, s čimer Center dosega bolj učinkovito realizacijo svojih načrtovanih nalog. V prispevku bo podana analiza metodologije sodelovanja.*

### **Ključne besede:**

*prevzemanje arhivskega gradiva, Hrvatski spominski in dokumentacijski center domovinske vojne, specializiran arhiv, sodelovanje, ustanove*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In November 2019, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia passed the National Plan on the Development of the Archival Activities. The full text of the document is published on the Ministry of Culture web page. In this document, it is stated that *“networking, cooperation with the creators of archival materials, the strengthening of the impact on the records management in the public services, development of new customer services and contents and providing open access to the archival sources to all social groups becomes a significant part of archives activities”* (Nacionalni plan razvoja arhivske djelatnosti, 2019, p. 2).

From its foundation, the Croatian Memorial and Documentation Center of the Homeland War (HMDCDR) cooperates with other public institutions – cultural, scientific and educational, as well as with associations related to the Homeland War and with individuals - holders or creators of archival records. The Center collects, consolidates, organizes and protects all the documentation and information which is connected and related to the Homeland War. It also collects, arranges, classifies and processes documentary and archival material produced during the Homeland War and related to it. The Center organizes professional and scientific lectures, exhibitions and scientific conferences. Also, the Center collaborates with archives, museums and other public institutions, collects and records data on the humanitarian, cultural, artistic and other activities related to the Homeland War. The Center also collects documentation and information related to the role of the Croats outside the Republic of Croatia during the Homeland War (Zakon o Hrvatskom memorijalno-dokumentacijskom centru Domovinskog rata, 2004).

Besides the Croatian State Archives, the Center is the only archives in Croatia whose activity is carried out on the territory of the entire Republic of Croatia. In accordance with that, the Center cooperates with archives, schools, museums, and other institutions throughout the entire country (Nacionalni plan razvoja arhivske djelatnosti, 2019, p.p, 6 - 7).

## 2. RECORDS ACQUISITION PROCEDURE OF THE CROATIAN MEMORIAL DOCUMENTATION CENTER OF THE HOMELAND WAR

According to the Law on Archival Records and Archives (2019) and the Law on Croatian Memorial Documentation Centre of the Homeland War (2004), the Center acquires archives by transfer under an established and legally based procedure, by deposit, by purchase and by gift. The process of acquisition begins with preparing the Archives Acquisition Statement. In the Statement, an archivist enters information on the date of the acquisition, name of the person, or the institution from which the records are transferred, a remark (if it is needed) and signatures of the archivist who acquires the material and the signature of the person who transfers it. For the records that are acquired as a donation, the Deed of gift is made and for the archives that are acquired by purchase, a purchase contract is made. All the records acquired by the Center become the property of the Center, unless it is agreed otherwise. After the acquisition, the information on the records is entered in the Records Accession Register, in which an archivist enters information on the date of the acquisition, name of the person or institution and address, the legal basis for the acquisition, classification and register number, the name of the creator, the content and the time frame, the amount of records, record group sign and possible comments.

### 3. COOPERATION WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

The Croatian Memorial Documentation Center of the Homeland War cooperates with non-governmental organizations, especially associations of the war veterans or civil associations related to the war. The cooperation is reflected in collecting archival records – documents, photo and video material, in book publishing and in organizing commemorations related to the anniversaries of the events from the Homeland War. The Center has an especially good cooperation with women's peace organizations and individual members or former members of those organizations.

“**Bastion of Love - Mothers for Peace**” was a Croatian women's non-governmental organization spontaneously formed at the beginning of 1991, when the first signs of the upcoming Greater Serbian aggression appeared. At the time, the activities of the organization were focused on the prevention of the war. During the summer of 1991, with the outbreak of the war, women, concerned for their sons – conscripts in the Yugoslav People's Army, organized protests against the war and demanded that the Army releases conscripts and lets them return home. After the outbreak of the war, the members of Bastion of Love were involved in humanitarian activities helping the children and the refugees. (Barunčić Pletikosić, Križe, 2017, pp. 383 – 384). The members of the “Bastion of Love - Mothers for Peace” have donated 4 archival boxes of records on the activities of the organization in the period 1991 – 1995 to the Center. Upon the acquisition, the records were arranged and an inventory was made. In 2013, Slavica Bilić, the first president of the organization donated 3 more archival boxes of records to the Center, one with photos and two with newspapers, magazines and newspaper clips from the period between 1991 and 1998. (Barunčić Pletikosić, Križe, 2017, p. 384.) Part of the documentation donated by Ms. Bilić was published in the book entitled “The Ring of Peace and Motherly Love”- written by Slavica Bilić and published by the Center in 2013. The fonds “Bastion of Love - Mothers for Peace” is divided in 4 series and contains letters and appeals to the foreign statesmen, embassies, to international NGO's, humanitarian organizations, etc. (series 1); records on the yearly assemblies of the Bastion of Love (series 2); correspondence with international humanitarian organizations and the documentation on the cooperation with the UN (International Commission on Missing Persons) and with the International Committee of the Red Cross (series 3); documentation related to the work with the victims of the war (series 4); press releases (series 5.) Records are written in Croatian, English, Italian, German and French languages. (Barunčić Pletikosić, Križe, 2017, p. 384.). The Center and Bastion of Love have also cooperated in organizing yearly meetings with the disabled war veterans which were held until 2014.

**Croatian Phoenix** is an association of families of imprisoned and disappeared Croatian war veterans. It was founded in August 1993 with the aim to organize joint activities to find and release Croatian war veterans detained and missing in the Homeland War and to monitor the exercise of their families' rights under existing regulations (<http://hrvatski-feniks.hr/>). Ljubica Butula, former president of the association donated 8 archival boxes and 2 files of records, 16 books and 17 magazines. Upon the acquisition, records were arranged and an inventory was made. The fonds “Croatian Phoenix” is divided in 4 series and contains letters, memos, and greetings (series 1); conference presentations, project documentation, minutes from the meetings and work reports (series 2); correspondence with the international humanitarian organizations and UN's International Commission on Missing Persons (series 3); reports on DNA identifications of victims and reports related to forensics. Records are written in English and Croatian language. (Barunčić Pletikosić, Križe, 2017, p. 385)

The Center has also developed significant cooperation with the **Society of Nurses and Medical Technicians from the Homeland War of the Croatian Nurses Association**. The founding of the Society was confirmed in October 2016 during the symposium “Let us not forget the 90’s.” organized by the nurses from Lipik, Croatian War Veterans Hospital and Vukovar General Hospital. The representatives of the Center attended the symposium and emphasized the significance of the nurses' work in the Homeland War. (Križe (ed.), 2019, p. 2). The founding assembly of the Society was held in Vukovar in November 2016 during the traditional visit of the Nurses Association to Vukovar. The main goals of the Society are to erect memorial plaques to the nurses and medical technicians who died and participated in the Homeland War in all the Croatian hospitals, to help nurses to gain the status of the Croatian war veteran, to organize the symposium “Let us not forget the 90’s” every year in a different city. (Križe (ed.), 2019, p. 8) At these symposia, nurses and medical technicians present their testimonies on their participation and their work in the Homeland War. In November 2018, the Croatian Memorial Centre purchased 89 testimonies written by more than 100 authors for the Center's Collection of the Memoir Records from the Society. These testimonies were edited and published in the book “Nurses and Medical Technicians in the Homeland War, Testimonies”. The book was published in March 2019 by the Croatian Memorial Documentation Centre of the Homeland War and Croatian Nurses Association.

Besides the civilian associations related to the Homeland War, the Center cooperates with numerous associations of Homeland War veterans. The head of the Center or/and the Center employees often attend the anniversaries related to the events from the Homeland War as well as anniversaries of the military units. For instance, Association of the Croatian War Veterans of the Homeland War of the 101 ZNG/HV Brigade, Zagreb – Susedgrad donated 2 archival boxes of records to the Center – mostly documents like commands and studies, photos and video materials. In 2012, the Center and the Association published the book entitled “101 Brigade of the Croatian Armed Forces”. A prominent example of cooperation with the NGO's is the one with the Croatian Red Cross. In 2016, the Center and Croatian Red Cross had co-published the book “Saving Life, Care of Civilians after the Operation “Storm””. The book is bilingual, written in English and Croatian and besides the authors' texts, there are also documents from the Croatian and international institutions published in both languages. The above-mentioned cases of cooperation are just a few examples as the Center cooperates with many other associations and non-governmental organizations.

#### **4. COOPERATION WITH STATE INSTITUTIONS**

Croatian Memorial Documentation Center of the Homeland War is a public institution, founded by the Government of the Republic of Croatia. Due to this fact, it often cooperates with state institutions. Center has developed a firm cooperation with the Ministry of Croatian Veterans. The Center is included in most of the Ministry's Law enforcement working groups. For example, the employees of the Center were members of the Working Group for the Preparation and Drafting of the Law on Victims of Sexual Violence in War (2013–2015) and teh Working Group for Analyzing the Current Situation and Drafting the Law on the Rights of Military and Civilian War Victims and Members of their Families (Izvešće o radu Centra, 2018). The Center's employees are also members of various Ministry's professional committees.

The Center is a partner institution on the Ministry's project supported by the EU “Digitalization of Archival Records from the Homeland War” and carried out by Public Institution Memorial Centre of Homeland War Vukovar.

With the Military Museum of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Croatia the Center had co-published multilingual (Croatian, English and German) book "Croatian War Poster 1991–1995". The Military Museum possesses a rich collection of posters produced during the Homeland War, which have been presented to the public on several occasions. Most of these posters are stored on digital media in the Center. "*The book was published to inform the public about the role and significance of posters and to provide a comprehensive insight into the collection.*" (Reljanović, 2010, p. 11).

One of the forms of cooperation HMDCDR has achieved with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs in the framework of projects of cultural promotion, public diplomacy and international recognition of the Republic of Croatia, organized by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and diplomatic missions and consular posts of the Republic of Croatia in the world, where HMDCDR signed up with a lecture on Destroyed Cultural Heritage during the Homeland War in Croatia, hosted by some of the HMDCDR employees during 2018.

## 5. COOPERATION WITH ARCHIVES, LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS

In accordance with its Statute, Croatian Memorial and Documentation Centre cooperates with other cultural, scientific and related institutions and organizations in order to improve its activities and scientific work (<https://centardomovinskograta.hr/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Statut.pdf>).

According to this, the Centre's activities include cooperation with other archival institutions in Croatia, museums, libraries and other legal entities with the aim of improving and expanding activities. The cooperation with other archives in Croatia, primarily with the Croatian State Archives, but also with other smaller archives, resulted in certain exhibitions on the Croatian War of Independence and in joint publications of documents, which include mainly documents from the Centre's archival materials relating to activities of YNA and Serbian paramilitary units during the existence of the Serbian parastate in Croatia. Over the last few years, the Centre has organised several exhibitions in cooperation with the Croatian archives.<sup>1</sup> For example, during 2016, in cooperation with the State Archives in Međimurje, the Centre prepared an exhibition of war photographs and posters focusing on democratic changes and the creation of the Republic of Croatia, and in September of that same year, the Centre, in cooperation with the State Archives in Šibenik, opened an exhibition on war affairs in Šibenik during the year 1991.

In December 2017, in cooperation with the Museum of the Homeland War in Dubrovnik, the Centre prepared and opened an exhibition of photographs with the theme of the Homeland War in Dubrovnik.

One of the finest examples how smaller and specialised archives such as the Memorial Documentation Centre of the Homeland War can cooperate with other archival institutions is joint organisation of the 49<sup>th</sup> conference of the Croatian archivists, which took place in October 2016 in the Plitvice Lakes National Park, and which usually takes place once a year. This conference was jointly organised by the Croatian Archival Society, the State Archives in Gospić and the HMDCDR. The conference was split into four main and several parallel sessions. Some of the topics of the sessions were "Archival materials created during the Homeland War", "Results of collecting and protecting archival materials so far", "Destruction of Archives and Materials in the

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<sup>1</sup> Information on all these activities and forms of cooperation can be found in the Centre's annual reports on the website.

Homeland War", etc., and as many as ten employees of HMDCDR prepared their presentations and papers for archival counseling and conference on these issues. The main task of this conference and consultation was to emphasize the importance of keeping archival materials relating to the Homeland War. Papers were presented in the Conference Proceedings which was published in October 2016 (*Arhivi i Domovinski rat, Radovi 49. savjetovanja hrvatskih arhivista*).

Another example of special and important forms of cooperation should also be mentioned in this paragraph; namely, the HMDCDR's cooperation with the special collection of the Vukovar Hospital as a Place of Remembrance, which came into existence in 2006 and is still open to all visitors in the basement of the Vukovar Medical Centre. The exhibition depicts war events which took place inside the hospital during the Autumn of 1991, and up until the siege of Vukovar. HMDCDR provided professional help with writing and translating of texts written on ceramic tiles on hospital walls between the old and the new part of the hospital. The texts are actually records of daily events during the battle of Vukovar, with an emphasis on events which took place in the hospital itself. Names of the killed hospital workers, as well as of all those killed at Ovčara (the mass grave) and on other locations are also written on the tiles, together with names of persons who are still listed as missing. At the opening of the exhibition in the Vukovar Hospital, HMDCDR published a special book in which one part is dedicated to the exhibition area, providing a detailed account of events covered by this unique exhibition (Nazor, A. (2006). *Mjesto sjećanja, Vukovarska bolnica*).

In the same year and on the same occasion, HMDCDR published a small catalog with the text for the Ovčara Memorial House, in Croatian, English, German, French and Italian.

## **6. COOPERATION WITH SCHOOLS, UNIVERSITIES AND OTHER SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS**

Cooperation between HMDCDR and schools in the Republic of Croatia refers primarily to expert lectures held by HMDCDR employees every year to primary and secondary school students on the Croatian War of Independence or on certain events from the Croatian War of Independence, as well as on sources, especially archival sources kept by the HMDCDR. Employees of the Centre also hold similar expert and scientific lectures to university students and employees of certain universities and colleges in the Republic of Croatia. This cooperation is also evident in the organisation and preparation of exhibitions at the request of certain primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities. During 2018, HMDCDR prepared exhibitions at the Sesvete Grammar School (photographs and posters on the topic of the international recognition of Croatia from the HMDCDR's Photographs Collection), at a primary school in Đakovo, entitled "Stolen Childhood – Memory of Children who Fell Victim to the Croatian War of Independence", as well as two exhibitions at the Croatian Military Academy on the Croatian War of Independence, also showing photographs stored at the HMDCDR's Photographs Collection.

Along with collection, protection and sorting, one of the key tasks and activities which the HMDCDR introduced in as early as 2007 and which has been performed continuously up to date, is publishing archival materials. The Centre has thus started a book series titled *Republic of Croatia and the Croatian War of Independence 1990–1995 – Documents*. When it comes to publishing archival materials, Article 2 (I. General Provisions) of the "Ordinance on the Use of Archival Materials" states that use of archival materials is considered "use of information aids regarding archival materials and of

archival materials regardless of the storage media. The use covers browsing of materials, transcribing, publishing, presenting, copying, lending and issuing of (certified) copies" (*Narodne novine* 105/9). According to the provisions of the Ordinance, archival materials are, among others, provided for use for official purposes, scientific research, publishing purposes, teaching purposes and exhibitions. There are no legal restrictions on publishing such materials since they deal with an unrecognised and self-proclaimed entity, that is, a parastate formed by occupying a part of Croatia by rebel Serbs aided from Serbia, and which eventually failed. It is in its publishing activity, in the part relating to the aforementioned book series, that the HMDCDR has achieved a special form of cooperation with the Croatian Institute of History – Unit for the History of Slavonia, Syrmia and Baranya, with which it co-published the total of 9 books from the series between 2007 and 2019, in which mostly documents of institutions of the rebel Serbs in Croatia between 1991 and 1995 were published. The books present, chronologically and with the required referencing, archival documents of the so-called Republic of the Serbian Krajina, which are mostly kept at the HMDCDR and to a lesser extent in other archival institutions in Croatia.

One of the books in the series, Book no. 21, entitled "*Aggression of the JNA and Serbian Troops (Lika, 1991 - 1992)*" was prepared and published in cooperation with the State Archives in Gospić, in January 2019, and territorially refers to the area of Lika, that is, contains documents of the JNA and Serbian paramilitary units operating in the Lika area during the Homeland War.

Of course, here are just a few examples of HMDCDR's collaboration with schools, colleges and other scientific institutions, but it can be said in general that this form of collaboration is almost daily and that HMDCDR has been pursuing it continuously since its inception and is most evident in the organization of joint lectures, forums, round tables, exhibitions and publishing.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The Croatian Memorial Documentation Centre of the Homeland War has established cooperation with various related institutions so far for more efficient execution of its planned tasks. In accordance with its mission, the *Archives and Archival Institutions Act* and the *Act on the Croatian Memorial and Documentation Center of the Homeland War* the Center collects archival records from the period of the Homeland War and related to the Homeland War from private holders, archival and other public institutions as well as from the nongovernmental organizations and associations. In the new *National Plan on the Development of the Archival Activities*, the Ministry of Culture emphasized the importance of networking and cooperation with the creators of the archival materials. In accordance with the Plan and its own policy, the Center will continue to search for new forms of cooperation with state institutions as well as with private holders and civil associations and will continue the present cooperation.

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## POVZETEK

### PREVZEMANJE (ARHIVSKEGA) GRADIVA V HRVAŠKEM SPOMINSKEM IN DOKUMENTACIJSKEM CENTRU DOMOVINSKE VOJNE IN SODELOVANJE Z JAVNIMI INSTITUCIJAMI TER NEVLADNIMI ORGANIZACIJAMI

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Prispevek se ukvarja s postopkom, prakso in problemi prevzemanja arhivskega gradiva od arhivov in ostalih javnih ustanov ter nevladnih organizacij. Avtorici pa izpostavljata še različne oblike sodelovanja s temi ustanovami.

Hrvaški spominski in dokumentacijski center domovinske vojne je bil ustanovljen leta 2005 kot javna znanstvena ustanova – kot poseben arhiv z namenom zbiranja, urejanja, varovanja ter strokovne in znanstvene obdelave kakor tudi objavljanja arhivskega gradiva hrvaške domovinske vojne.

V skladu s temi nalogami in na podlagi Zakona o arhivskem gradivu in arhivskih institucijah ter Zakonom o Hrvaškem spominskem in dokumentacijskem centru domovinske vojne zbira Center arhivsko gradivo iz časa domovinske vojne in gradivo, povezano s to vojno, in sicer od fizičnih oseb, arhivskih in drugih javnih ustanov ter od nevladnih organizacij in društev. Center pogosto sodeluje z društvi ter zbira dokumente, video gradivo in fotografije ter organizira ali sodeluje pri projektih, povezanih s kulturo spomina. Še posebej dobro sodelovanje je razvil z ženskimi organizacijami domovinske vojne, kot so Branik ljubezni in Ženske v domovinski vojni.

Center organizira strokovna in znanstvena predavanja, razstave ter znanstvene konference. Prav tako sodeluje z arhivi, muzeji in drugimi javnimi institucijami, zbira in popisuje podatke o humanitarnih, kulturnih, umetniških in drugih aktivnostih, povezanih z domovinsko vojno. Zbira dokumentacijo in informacije, povezane z vlogo Hrvatov izven Republike Hrvaške med domovinsko vojno. Dobro sodeluje z institucijami, povezanimi z Ministrstvom za obrambo – Vojaškim muzejem in Osrednjim vojaškim arhivom. Prav tako sodeluje z Ministrstvom hrvaških braniteljev ter Ministrstvom za obrambo pri primerjalnih analizah podatkov, še posebej pri zapisih o žrtvah ter pri skupnih digitizacijskih projektih, ki jih financira EU.

Poleg Hrvaškega državnega arhiva je Center edini arhiv na Hrvaškem, ki opravlja svojo dejavnost na celotnem ozemlju države. Tako sodeluje z arhivi, šolami, muzeji in ostalimi ustanovami po vsej državi. Ena izmed pomembnejših nalog Centra so objave arhivskih zapisov, spominov in znanstvenih študij, pogosto v sodelovanju z drugimi ustanovami.