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On this basis the undersigned Croatian cultural and scientific institutions and organisations believe that it is indispensably necessary:

**1.** To establish, with a constitutional ordinance, the clear and indisputable equality of the four literary languages: Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian and Macedonian. For this purpose the formulation in the Constitution of the SFRY, article 131, needs to be amended to read as follows:

'Federal laws and other general acts of federal bodies are to be published in the authentic text in the four literary languages of the peoples of Yugoslavia: Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian and Macedonian. In official communication the bodies of the federation are bound to abide by the principle of the equality of all languages of the peoples of Yugoslavia.' The rights of the nationalities in Yugoslavia also need to be secured with an adequate formulation.

With its imprecision, the former constitutional decree on the 'Serbo-Croatian, that is, Croato-Serbian language' enables these two parallel names to be understood in practice as synonyms, and not as a basis for the equality of the Croatian and Serbian literary language, equal among themselves, and in relation to the languages of the remaining Yugoslav peoples. Such vagueness enables the Serbian literary language, as it is used, to be imposed as the uniform language for Serbs and Croats by the force of reality. That this indeed is the reality is proven by numerous examples, among which as the newest are the recent conclusions of the fifth Assembly of the League of Composers of Yugoslavia. These conclusions were published comparatively in a Serbian, Slovenian and Macedonian version, as if the Croatian literary language did not exist at all or as if it was identical with the Serbian literary language.

The undersigned institutions and organisations believe that in such cases the Croatian people are not represented and have been led into an unequal position. Such a practice can in no way be justified by the otherwise indisputable scientific fact that the Croatian and Serbian literary language has a common linguistic basis.

**2.** In line with the above claims and explanations it is necessary to secure the consistent use of the Croatian literary language in schools, press, public and political life, on the radio and television whenever it comes to the Croatian population; and that civil servants, teachers and public workers, regardless of their origin, officially use the literary language of the milieu in which they work.

We submit this declaration to the parliament of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, the Federal Assembly of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and to the general public in order to unequivocally formulate the stated principles on the occasion of preparations for changes to the constitution and, in line with this, to secure their complete application in our social life.

Croatian Cultural and Publishing Society  
'Matica hrvatska'

The Association of Croatian Writers

PEN-Club, Croatian Centre

Croatian Philological Society

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Academy of Science and Arts

Department of Contemporary Literature  
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Department of Yugoslav Literatures  
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Department of Older Croatian Literature  
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Department of Newer Croatian Literature  
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Institute for the Study of Literature  
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Old Church Slavonic Institute in Zagreb

The Association of Literary Translators  
of Croatia

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50<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY

OF THE  
DECLARATION  
ON THE NAME  
AND POSITION  
OF THE  
**CROATIAN  
LITERARY  
LANGUAGE**

1967-2017



CROATIAN STUDIES FOUNDATION  
ZAKLADA HRVATSKIH STUDIJA

## WHAT IS THE DECLARATION ON THE NAME AND POSITION OF THE CROATIAN LITERARY LANGUAGE?

What is the *Declaration on the Name and the Position of Croatian Literary Language*? And why is it so important for Croatian language, linguistic policy and Croatian history in general?

On 15 March 1967, 140 prominent Croatian intellectuals, representing 19 leading cultural and scholarly Croatian institutions, signed and submitted to the Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Croatia (SRC) and to the Federal Parliament of Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) the *Declaration on the Name and the Position of the Croatian Literary Language*.

The *Declaration* called for constitutional remedies, that is, the equality of the four standard languages of SFRY: Croatian, Macedonian, Serbian and Slovenian; and for the unimpeded development and consistent use of the Croatian standard language in schools, the press, public and political forums, and on radio and television networks whenever broadcasts were directed to a Croatian audience.

Immediately upon its publication in the Zagreb weekly newspaper 'Telegram' (17 March 1967), the *Declaration* caused a flood of political protests, especially after it had been condemned by the ruling Communist Party. In Yugoslav media the *Declaration* was referred to as 'hostile propaganda' in line with the judgement of the CP. As a sociolinguistic document however, the *Declaration* undermined and, by 1971, denounced all Yugoslav Communist Party attempts to create a hybrid and artificial state language (Croato-Serbian).

The *Declaration on the Name and the Position of the Croatian Literary Language* finally received due recognition – and a place in the history of Croatian standard language and Croatian sociolinguistics – in the 1990s, with the coming of Croatia's freedom, sovereignty and independence. The period 11 to 17 March each year has been declared 'Days of Croatian Language' in commemoration of the anniversary of the *Declaration on the Name and the Position of the Croatian Literary Language*.

The language used within the *Declaration* may seem strange from today's perspective, however it should be read in the context of the turbulent times in which it was written. The *Declaration* is a pillar of Croatian struggle for freedom and independence. It has become a landmark in the history of Croatian language, language policy and Croatian politics in general. It heralds the beginning of the end of the Yugoslav unitary rule. As Croatian academician Stjepan Babić, said: 'The *Declaration* won before complete Croatian victory, and it therefore deserves to be always remembered.'

This year we commemorate, celebrate and salute the *Declaration's* 50th anniversary.

# Declaration

## on the name and position of the Croatian literary language

The centuries-old struggle of the Yugoslav nations for national freedom and social justice culminated in revolutionary transformation in the period from 1941 to 1945. The achievements of the National Liberation struggle and the socialist revolution enabled all peoples and nationalities in Yugoslavia to enter a new phase of their historical existence. Relying on the fundamental principles of socialism concerning the right of each human being to live free from subjugation, and the right of every nation to complete sovereignty and equality with all other national communities, the Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians formed a federal union, built from six socialist republics, as a guarantee of that reciprocal equality, mutual brotherhood and socialist cooperation.

The principle of national sovereignty and complete equality encompasses the rights of all nations to protect all attributes of their national existence and to maximally develop their economic and cultural activities. Amongst these attributes, the national name used by the Croatian people for their own language has a crucially important role, as it is the inalienable right of every nation to call its language by its own name, regardless of whether it is a philological phenomenon which belongs, either in the shape of a separate linguistic variant or even in its entirety, to some other nation.

The Novi Sad Agreement justly declared the common linguistic basis of the Serbian and Croatian literary language without denying the historical, cultural-historical, national and political truth concerning the right of every nation to their own linguistic medium of national and cultural life. These attainments were also formulated by constitutional texts and the program of the League of Communists, the political leader of our nations in the revolutionary struggle.

But in spite of the clarity of these fundamental principles, certain imprecisions in the formulations enabled them to be bypassed, distorted and transgressed within the wider phenomena of deviations in the reality of our social and economic life. It is well known in which circumstances the tendencies of etatism, unitarism and hegemonism have been revived in our country. In connection with these, there has also appeared the concept of the necessity of a uniform 'state language'. This role was assigned to the Serbian literary language because of the dominant influence of the administrative centre of our state community.

In spite of the VIII Congress, and the IV and V Plenums of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which have particularly stressed the importance of the socialist principles of the equality of our peoples and, accordingly, of their languages, the imposition of the 'state language' is being implemented today by means of the administrative apparatus and the means of public and mass communications (federal bodies, Tanjug, YRTV in common broadcasts, PTT, railways, so-called materials of economic and political literature, film magazines, various administrative forms), and then by the means of linguistic practice in the Yugoslav People's Army, federal administration, legislature, diplomatic service and political organisations, so that the Croatian literary language is being relegated and led into the unequal position of a local dialect.

Particularly important initiatives of economic and social reform, relying on the essential characteristics of our self-managed socialist society, oblige us to undertake everything necessary in the area of our activities – language, literature, science and culture in general – to realise and bring about the stated principles of our socialist system into immediate practice.