



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on January 25, 2012

Croatia Votes to Join EU After Pensions Threatened

After an intense pro-European Union tax-funded lobbying campaign warning of disaster, Croatians voted by an almost two-to-one margin to join the troubled EU despite a debt crisis which threatens to sink the region's single currency and an increasingly authoritarian tone emanating from Brussels. The nation's political class furiously prodded voters into backing membership in the supranational regime, threatening economic doom if voters rejected the bid. Foreign Minister Vesna Pusic, for example, said voting against the EU "would be like shooting yourself in the foot."



Politicians and officials even [told](#) citizens that pensions for seniors and veterans would be in danger if they voted "no." And official threats of economic chaos for failing to support the EU were rampant.

The largely [state-controlled and government-owned media](#) threatened voters, too. Among the most outrageous threats: If voters refused to join the EU, Croatia might be forced into a sort of "Balkan union" with its arch-enemy Serbia.

The EU, meanwhile, had already sent and promised more than half-a-billion tax dollars in "pre-accession assistance" — cynics called it a "bribe" — before the referendum. Billions more from EU taxpayers were pledged for "infrastructure," "development," and other programs — assuming Croatia joined.

International institutions added to the pro-EU propaganda. "The passing of the referendum would boost nearly all of Croatia's prospects, while a rejection would be a huge opportunity loss for the country and the economy," [claimed](#) senior economist Sanja Madzarevic-Sujster with the World Bank's office in Zagreb just two days before the polls opened.

And if Croatians refused, disaster would surely follow. "The credit rating would be immediately endangered, and implications for the country's finances, development and investment prospects would be broad," threatened Madzarevic-Sujster. Other top World Bank officials in Croatia echoed those remarks.

Almost incredibly, despite the tireless government lobbying and a blatant fear-mongering campaign funded by taxpayers, opinion polls taken shortly before the referendum still showed a deeply divided populace. Pollsters were not sure which way the vote would go even days before the election, with a January 19 IPSOS-Puls survey [finding](#) barely 53-percent support for the union. Some polls even [showed](#) voters rejecting membership by a significant margin.

But anti-EU sentiment still runs deep among opponents, who [clashed with police](#) in Zagreb the day before the election as they tried to take down an EU flag flying prominently in a city square. Critics said joining the bloc would mean a major loss of precious sovereignty — hard won in the 1990s after a



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bloody civil war — as well as the potential to be sucked into the union's disastrous debt crisis. Suffocating EU regulations were also a [primary concern](#) among small-business owners.

"An independent and sovereign Croatia is the only framework that can guarantee Croats freedom, cultural progress and material wealth," said chief Milovan Sibl of Only Croatia — Movement for Croatia, an organization that worked to educate voters on why they should reject the EU.

On January 22, significantly less than half of eligible voters turned out to vote, which analysts [interpreted](#) as a sign of apathy. But in the end, about 66 percent voted in favor of joining, with around 33 percent voting against.

"The people are obviously tired," claimed Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic after the results were announced, attempting to explain away the poor showing. "It would have been better that the turnout was larger, but that's reality."

Brussels, meanwhile, celebrated the news. "The upcoming accession of Croatia sends a clear signal to the whole region of south-eastern Europe," the supranational regime said in a statement following the vote. "It shows that through political courage and determined reforms, EU membership is within reach."

Top EU bosses including European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and European Council President Herman Van Rompuy also cheered. They called the referendum results "good news for Croatia, good news for the region and good news for Europe" in a [joint statement](#).

While only about 44 percent of citizens eligible to vote turned out in the election, nearly 85 percent of voters turned out in 1992 to support independence from the former Yugoslavia. Analysts noted that the results showed just three out of ten Croatians were enthusiastic enough — or, more likely, sufficiently frightened — to vote in favor of the EU.

Anti-EU activists in Croatia — obviously at a significant disadvantage against the well-funded taxpayer-financed propaganda campaign supporting the union — seized on the numbers to reject the results outright. "The turnout shows that Croatia has turned its back on the EU," anti-EU campaign leader and war veteran Zeljko Sacic was [quoted as saying](#) by *Time* magazine. "This referendum is illegitimate. We will never recognize it."

The EU has become notorious for ignoring voters when they reject the union or its proposals. The electorates of several major European countries, for example, repeatedly turned down the so-called "Constitution" only to have it [rammed down their throats anyway](#).

And when that fails — as in Switzerland, where voters have consistently rejected the EU and its dictates — the supranational regime uses its size and power to bully citizens into bowing down. Late last year, Brussels even [threatened the tiny alpine nation with "retaliation measures"](#) if Swiss voters refused to raise their relatively low tax rates.

Incredibly, the EU has now started overthrowing democratically elected leaders of member states when they refuse to obey Brussels' dictates. [Italy](#) and [Greece](#) have both seen their leaders toppled in what [critics called "coups"](#) only to be replaced by EU-selected insiders who vowed to do the eurocrats' bidding.

Hungary, meanwhile, is under intense EU pressure for adopting a new Constitution that reins in central bankers, protects the lives of unborn children, and enshrines God, Christianity, and family values as the nation's foundation. Brussels is [threatening to take legal action](#) unless the Hungarian people back down.



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Assuming all existing EU member states vote to support Croatia's bid, the nation of less than five million people will become the 28th formerly sovereign country to join "Europe." The accession is expected to come by mid-2013. Croatia will not adopt the single currency, however, until 2015 at the earliest.

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Photo: Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic after casting his ballot at EU membership referendum in Zagreb, Croatia, Sunday, Jan. 22, 2012:

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