

Meter stamps in Croatia

by Hens Wolf

The year 2023

In May 2023 I travelled in Croatia. The country is a little bit larger than The Netherlands (my home country) and has only 4 million inhabitants compared to the 17 million Dutchmen.



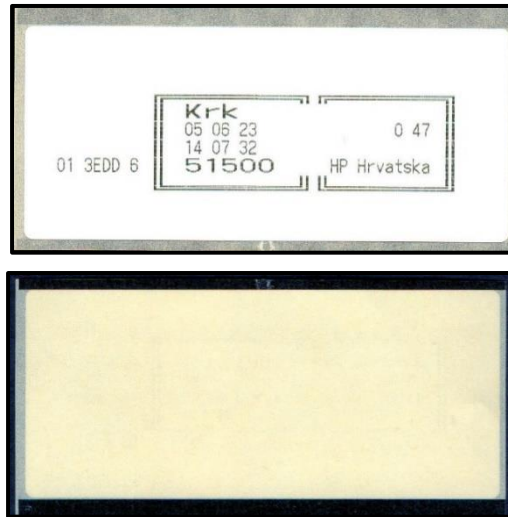
Only recently (1 January 2023), Croatia introduced the euro as its currency. The contours of the country can be found on the reverse side of the 2-euro coin, as well as the country name HRVATSKA. That name is also printed on Croatia's meter stamps. That is what this article is about.



Besides visits to old fortified cities such as Split and Dubrovnik and the spectacular National Park of the Plitvice Lakes, I had the opportunity to visit a post office here and there on the hunt for meter stamps. But that did not turn out easy in some cases. A few times I was notified that I was not allowed to take the meter stamps with me: they should be glued to an envelope to be handed over at the counter. In that regard I was lucky to be pardoned in two post offices. It appeared that two different kinds of meter stamps existed. They could be

identified by the different print and the different liner, on which they were dispensed from the machine.

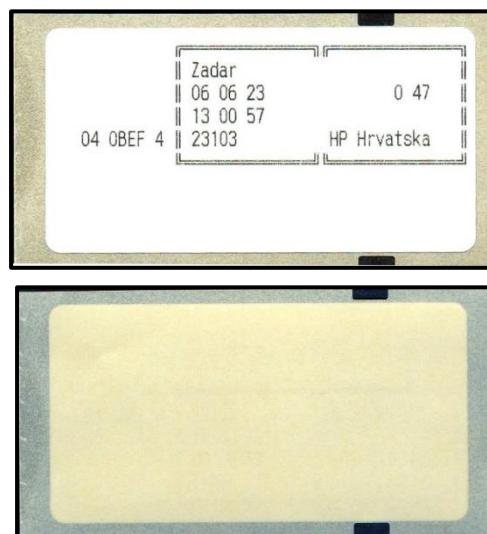
The meter stamp in *pic. #1* comes from a machine in the post office of Krk, a town in northern Croatia on the island of the same name. The liner shows two horizontal black stripes on the top and bottom. The meter stamp is 79x35 mm.



Pic.#1: stamp from Krk

I acquired the meter stamp in *pic. #2* the next day in a post office in Zadar. The liner did not show the black stripes, but only two slits on the top and bottom, apparently meant for aligning the meter to be printed correctly. This meter stamp is 70x35 mm.

Also notice the clear differences in the prints on the stamps.



Pic. #2: stamp from Zadar

Although the stamps seem to be coming from different franking machines, the receipts are identical (*pic. #3*). Please notice that the rate is printed in euro's. At

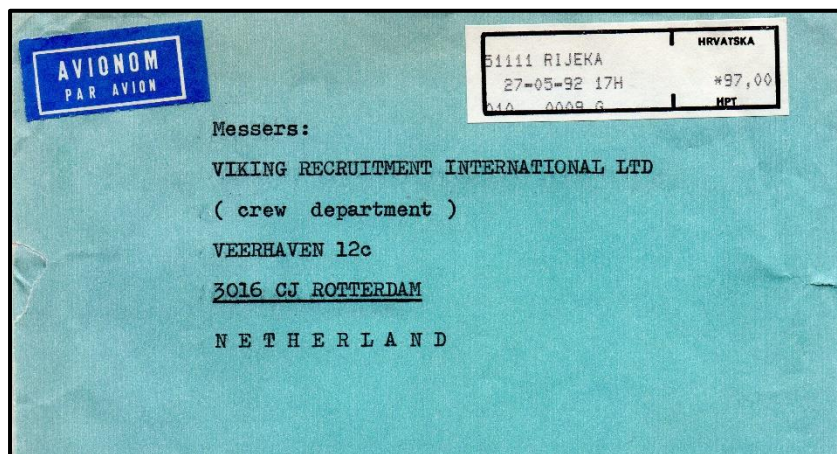
the same time the rate of the previous currency *Kuna* is still there: “(kn) (3.54)”. This is to acquaint the patrons with the new euro rates.



Pic. #3: euro and kuna

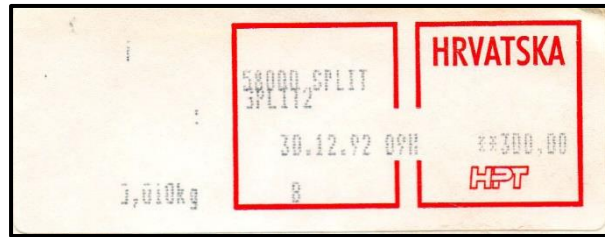
Retrospective of the period 1991-2023

I took these recent experiences as a reason to look back into the history of meter stamps in Croatia, after the independence of the country in June 1991. The first stamps in those first few years had a black frame (pic. #4).



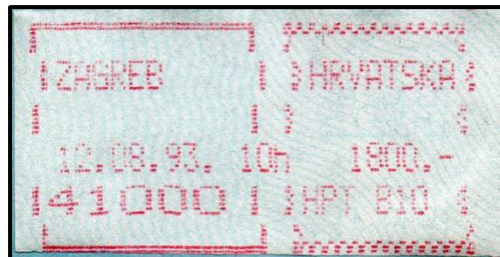
Pic. #4: 27-05-92 Rijeka

A stamp at the end of 1992 shows red pre-printed frames and a different formatting (pic. #5).



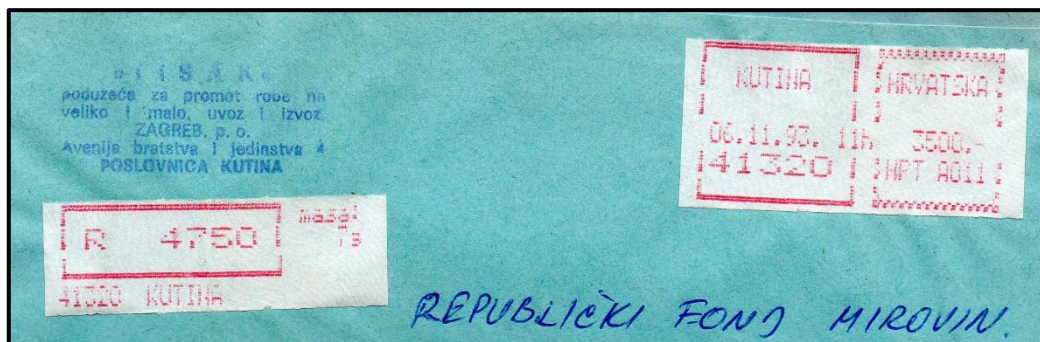
Pic. #5: 30.12.92 Split

Then several years follow with an underprint with blue vertical waves and a red machine print (*pic. #6*).



Pic. #6: 12.08.93 Zagreb

At first, the R-label on registered letters was printed separately (*pic. #7*), but a few years later the R-label and the weight are printed directly on the meter stamp itself (*pic. #8*)



Pic. #7: 06.11.93 with separate R-label



Pic. #8: 03.04.95 with integrated R-label

Then I jump about eight years onwards to a stamp dated 27.01.03 with a black print (*pic. #9*). The location number of the post office in Požega (34000) can be found both on the stamp and on the accompanying R-label.



Pic. #9: black print

Only slightly more than 14 days later, on 13.02.03, a machine in Zagreb dispensed a stamp with a new frame (*pic. #10*). Also new is the R-label being printed on the same paper, but separate from the the stamp. The location number 10101 appears both on the stamp and the R-label.



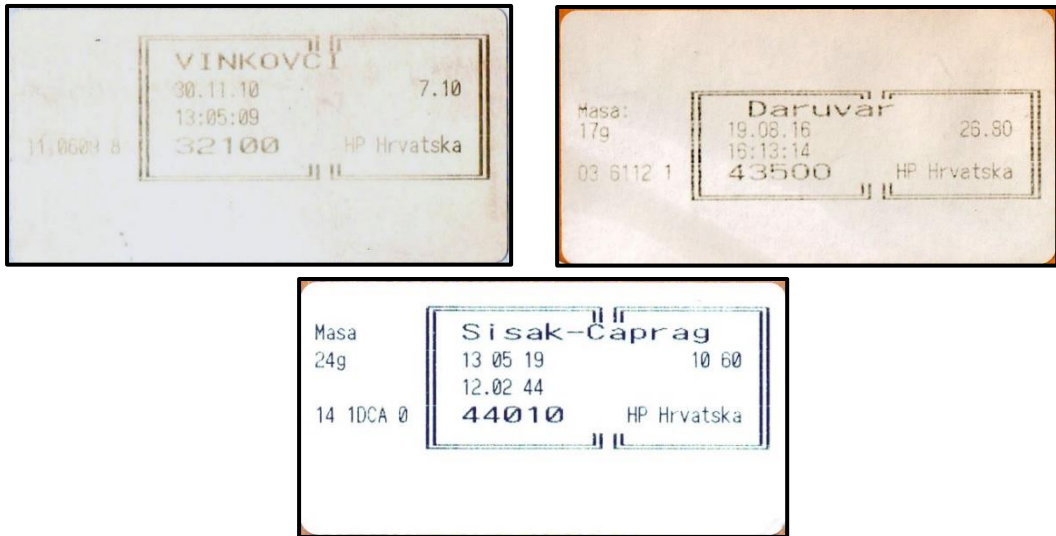
Pic. #10: new frame

And -how is it possible?- in the same month a stamp dated 03.02.03 pops up with an R-label and a totally different formatting (*pic. #11*).



Pic. #11: variation

With a renewed jump, this time from 2003 to 2010, we arrive at the type of frnaking meters that is still in use in 2023 (*pic. #12*). These date from 2010, 2016 and 2019. You might compare them with pic. #1!



Pic. #12: present generation since 2010

But surprisingly enough, meters of a completely different type exist in this period. For the first time, the R-number is also printed as a barcode, such as on the stamp dated 09.03.10 (*pic. #13*).



Pic. #13: R-number and barcode

And even from this type a variation exists (*pic. #14*): immediately observable is the missing horizontal line and the smaller letter type of the capital R compared to the R in *pic. #13*.



Pic. #14: variation

Even until late May 2022 and possibly later, the stamp in pic. #13 was used for additional franking on this package from Dubrovnik dated 25.05.2022 (pic. #15).



Pic. #15: additional franking

Epilogue

All in all my visit to Croatia had some surprises in it in the first few days, coming upon two different types of meter stamps with the new euro rates. And when looking back in the recent past of this relatively new state since 1991, an interesting variety of meter stamps in post offices comes to light. I have not exhausted the subject in this overview, which opens the possibility for additions. Please send your comments to hencywolf@gmail.com. Thank you very much.

Hens Wolf, 15-08-2023