

# **AMCHAM CROATIA - POLICY RULES AND PROCEDURES**

## **VISION**

AmCham's vision is to be the leading business association contributing to a strong and competitive business environment in Croatia, as well as growing transatlantic cooperation. This can only be achieved by playing a major role in Croatian policy-making.

The most important goal is to make sure that AmCham's members have the opportunity to participate in the political process and contribute to the development of the Croatian economy and society as a whole.

## **MAIN POLICY GOALS**

AmCham is a progressive, modern chamber that wants to make Croatia the leading country for doing business in central and south-eastern Europe.

The main goals of AmCham's policy work are the following:

- A more international, outgoing, and connected Croatia
- Transparency and honesty
- Openness to innovation and new ways of thinking
- Sustainable and efficient public administration
- A tax system that encourages investment and innovation
- Free and fair trade
- Flexible labor market
- A highly-educated and productive society

These goals guide AmCham's work and help determine whether or not it gets involved in a particular policy issue. They help position AmCham in the market, as well as communicate clearly and consistently both internally and externally. Focusing on these goals also helps influence key players in public institutions and the Government via policy recommendations aimed at creating a stronger and more vibrant business community in Croatia.

## **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

AmCham's policy advocacy activities are primarily conducted through expert committees, formed by AmCham's members and approved by the Board of Governors (Board).

Committees enable AmCham members to address issues and obstacles they face in doing business in Croatia and contribute to the resolution of their specific problems through the preparation of position papers which propose concrete recommendations to relevant government stakeholders.

Any AmCham member may propose establishing a new committee by submitting to the Executive Office a detailed written concept of the committee. The initiative has to be backed by at least five corporate or patron AmCham members willing to participate in its work (in writing). Committees determine the individual policy issues that are taken up,

prepare position papers on the selected issues and provide support and advice to the AmCham staff with regards to policy advocacy work.

The role of the Board is to ensure that the policy goals pursued by AmCham are in line with the mission, vision, and current strategy and are in the best interests and wishes of the members.

Committee work plans are determined at the end of each year and approved by AmCham's Board. Nevertheless, a committee member can also propose a topic for discussion on an ad-hoc basis during the year. Work plans facilitate planning and monitoring of the preparation and publication of AmCham's position papers. Subsequent advocacy work (meetings with key stakeholders, events etc.) is not included as timelines depend on the complexity of the topic and the political environment, as well as the resources of the AmCham Executive Office.

Progress is monitored through the Policy Group, which consist of the members of the Board, the Executive Director, the Policy Manager and the Committee Chairs and meets three times a year. The Policy Group provides a platform for the Committee Chairs to present the activities of their committees, enabling:

- Monitoring by the Board of progress in relation to approved committee work plans;
- Facilitation of cooperation between committees on horizontal issues;
- Prioritization of policy activities considering the political/business climate;
- Agreement on a consistent policy message communicated by AmCham.

Committees are responsible for the initiation and preparation of at least 1 yearly position paper providing added value to the AmCham membership. Noncompliance with the minimum requirements will mean cancellation of the committee at the Board's annual review. The annual review includes an evaluation by the Board of the work of each committee. The Board may decide to cancel a committee due to unsatisfactory performance of the committee work plan, low member attendance or other reasons deemed relevant by the Board. Following a cancellation decision, the Committee Chair has the right to present the Board the case for the continuance of committee work, following which the confirmed or overturned decision by the Board is considered final.

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Only AmCham members are eligible to participate in committee work. Participation is jointly promoted by the Board, the Executive Office and Committee Chairs. The goal is to gather members who have experience or expert knowledge of certain policy issues, in order to make committees not only forums for topical discussion, but productive working groups in terms of preparing relevant and high-quality policy recommendations. It is the quality of AmCham's members' work that makes the organization a desirable policy making partner to the Government. Membership rules have therefore been devised.

Member companies may nominate representatives to any number of committees, but a single representative may not be a member of more than three committees. Member companies may nominate up to three representatives to a single committee.

Membership begins only after a fully completed Committee Sign-up Form is submitted by an AmCham member in good standing to the Executive Office and approved by the committee members.

The committee members make the decision to accept or reject a new committee member and in doing so are required to base their decision on the following criteria:

- Recommendation of the Executive Office;
- Outline of what the member wants to accomplish through the committee as presented on the Committee Sign-up Form and/or at a committee meeting;
- Suitability of member's stated expertise and/or experience required for active and constructive contribution to committee discussions and work;
- Attendance and activity in past meetings in case of a request for membership renewal.

The committee members decide whether to accept a new member by majority vote via email communication facilitated by the Executive Office, and must include a justification of a negative vote. Members may appeal against the rejection decision to the Board, which will make the final decision on the matter taking into account AmCham's rules and procedures.

When a member is absent for more than half of the meetings in a year, committee membership is automatically terminated. If the member wishes to re-apply for committee membership, the above procedure is repeated, with the additional requirement of committing to regular attendance on the Committee Sign-up Form.

The Executive Office is requested to attend all committee meetings.

### **COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Each committee confirms/elects one Committee Chair and one Vice-Chair for a 2 year term. Only AmCham members can be nominated for the Chair and Vice Chair positions.

The Chair and Vice-Chair are eligible for maximum two consecutive terms in their respective positions. The voting is administered by the Executive Office, takes place via email, is confidential and the winner is determined by a majority vote. Votes are allocated per member company, so a single member company has a single vote even if it is represented by more than one representative.

The Committee Chair (or in his/her absence Vice-Chair), in coordination with the Policy Manager:

- Prepares meeting agendas and moderates meeting discussions in line with committee meeting rules;
- Coordinates the work of the committee as per the yearly work plan approved by the Board, e.g. by ensuring that position papers are prepared as per agreed deadlines;
- Proposes the yearly plan by identifying the topics to be discussed by the committee;
- Contributes to the organization of policy activities (events, meetings with stakeholders etc.) by the Executive Office, in line with AmCham's activity planning and budgeting, as well as actively participates in these activities;
- Participates in Policy Group meetings, at which he/she reports to the Board on committee activities and progress in relation to the yearly plan
- Encourages AmCham members to become involved in the work of the committee;

- If approved by the Executive Office, presents the work prepared by the committee and supported by AmCham membership, at external expert conferences, events and similar.

All Committee Chairs are approved by the Board. A Committee Chair may resign at any time with thirty days' notice to the Executive Office. If a Committee Chair is not operating effectively, the Board may vote to remove and replace the Committee Chair or, if appropriate, cancel the committee. Prior to voting, the Chair shall be entitled to present arguments to the Board about why he or she should not be removed.

### **COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Only approved and active committee members are eligible to attend regular Committee meetings. Other AmCham members may request or be invited by the Committee Chair or the Executive Office to attend a particular committee meeting on a topic of interest.

Committee meetings are closed for companies who are not AmCham members. The Executive Office may invite public institutions/agencies and international organizations to attend committee meetings where their expertise or feedback is considered valuable.

Committees generally meet on a monthly basis, with additional meetings set as necessary. Each committee should meet a minimum of six times a year. Meetings are set on a bi-annual basis in December and June, and meeting invitations are sent out by the Executive Office in Outlook calendar format.

The agenda for the meetings (including outlined meeting objective) should be sent out one week in advance, with all necessary supporting documents provided with sufficient time for review. Committee members may propose amendments to the agenda up to 2 days prior to the meeting.

The venue for the meetings is the AmCham office meeting room. The meetings are moderated by the Committee Chair (or Vice-Chair) with the support of the Policy Manager (or other Executive Office representative). Meetings generally commence at 9.30 a.m. and last for 90 minutes. Meetings may be shorter or longer depending on the agenda, at the discretion of the Committee Chair.

Meeting should follow the following agenda to the extent possible:

- Introduction of any new members
- "Regrets" and noting of non-attendance
- Purpose of the meeting
- Approval of previous meeting's minutes
- Update on Executive Office activities
- Individual member updates (general policy, industry, or company-specific developments)
- Position paper discussion/planning/drafting
- Decision items and task assignments
- Any other business

Committee members are expected to regularly attend meetings, actively participate in discussions and contribute to the preparation of position papers according to their expertise and resources.

In addition, the following committee meeting rules should be observed:

- Members should prepare for the meeting by reviewing the agenda and supporting documents sent by the Policy Manager;
- Discussion should follow the agenda with any additional issues brought up under “Any other business” or tabled for the next meeting;
- Members should be punctual so that the meeting starts and ends at the scheduled time;
- Use of laptops or mobile phones is not allowed in order to minimize distractions;
- Members should use professional, polite and respectful communication;
- The Committee Chair should ensure that all members are given an adequate amount of time to participate, with their contributions acknowledged and opinions respected.
- New members should actively engage in discussion on a particular topic only after they have familiarized themselves with the previous work done by the committee on the same topic, in order to ensure productive discussion.

Committee policy work and related closed AmCham events are considered confidential unless publicly announced by the Executive Office.

To the extent specifically prepared for AmCham purposes, all materials, documents, etc. developed by the member or member's company for committee activities or projects are considered to be AmCham's property. In addition, all initiatives and/or ideas for activities developed within the committee are considered AmCham's intellectual property.

### **TASK FORCES**

A task force can be formed by the Executive Office on the proposal of any member that brings to attention a policy issue not in the scope of any of the active committees and not requiring the setting up of a new committee. However, members can launch policy initiatives outside the committee system only if the initiative is supported by at least five corporate or patron members.

Task forces are formed when necessary and dissolved when the issue has been resolved or by agreement between the Executive Office and members involved. Committee meeting rules apply.

### **POLICY ISSUES AND POSITIONING**

AmCham has a unique role in Croatian public affairs compared to organizations such as the Croatian Chamber of Commerce (HGK) or the Croatian Employers Association (HUP). AmCham is unique in that its membership is international in both its legal form and outlook, and members come from all industries and growth stages.

As such, AmCham only gets involved in issues where it can really make a difference. The test for selecting an issue (“Policy Test”) should be as follows:

1. Is there a reasonable prospect of affecting change?
2. Is this in the best interests of members?

3. Is there a need for AmCham to participate in the discussion?

If all three conditions are met, the committee will proceed with the work. If not, AmCham has to carefully reconsider its involvement. The final decision is made by a majority vote of all committee members either at the committee meeting or through subsequent email communication for non-attendees. Votes are allocated per member company, so a single company has a single vote even if represented by more than one representative.

## **POSITION PAPERS**

Position papers are the main format through which AmCham represents the views and recommendations of its members. Position papers are prepared by committee members, with the support of the Policy Manager, and approved by the entire membership. They are the first and key step of each policy advocacy initiative, which includes meetings with Government ministers and officials, events targeted at main stakeholders, media coverage of main recommendations etc.

Position papers should be specific and detailed, take into consideration both best global practices and specific characteristic of the Croatian economic and political system. Recommendations should draw on members' experiences of obstacles to doing business, and be aimed at implementing specific and feasible solutions to facilitate business and improve the competitiveness of the Croatian economy. A proposed position should advance the interests of member companies, be likely to have an influence on the target audience, and be of a significantly international nature.

In summary, the general guiding principles for drafting position papers are:

- Support by at least five committee members;
- Estimate impact on business;
- Undertake thorough research, include real life local experiences and international best practice examples;
- Maximize the impact of policy statements by drafting an Advocacy Plan;
- Ensure transparency of drafting process;
- Manage divergences of opinion - position papers should represent the consensus view of member companies
- Respect deadlines.

## **POSITION PAPER PROCEDURE**

After basic research on the selected issues has been completed, committee members assess whether the Policy Test conditions have been met and decide by a majority vote whether or not to take a position.

The preparation of a position paper is the responsibility of a dedicated Stream Leader. It is expected that the member that initially proposed a policy issue acts as the Stream Leader. In cases where a policy issue is proposed by a number of members, the stream leader should be selected by mutual agreement between the proposers, or nominated by the Committee Chair, according to their level of expertise and availability of resources.

Other committee members are expected to provide their support through regular review of position paper drafts, providing written comments, active participation in committee

discussions and, wherever possible, submission of relevant information and/or drafting specific paragraphs of the position paper.

### **Stage 1**

First version of the position paper is circulated to committee members a week in advance of the committee meeting, with further comments and suggestions received either in writing or presented during meeting discussion.

The stream leader revises the position paper according to the comments received. The Executive Office takes into consideration comments related to the advocacy plan but is not under obligation to amend it. The advocacy plan is determined by the Executive Office in line with its policy advocacy know-how, connections to relevant stakeholders and budget.

The position paper and the advocacy plan are then circulated by email to all committee members to verify (5 working days) that comments received have been adequately incorporated. Additional comments are immediately incorporated if not substantial (corrections, clarifications etc.), or otherwise discussed at the next committee meeting, thereby repeating the 1<sup>st</sup> Stage procedure.

### **Stage 2 (5 working days)**

The first draft of the position paper approved by the committee is circulated to the AmCham membership to inform, encourage opinions, and solicit support. An additional notification is sent to the members of the Board to ensure their involvement as representatives of AmCham's main policy body.

All comments should be submitted to the Executive Office in written form, following which they are circulated to committee members by email and then either incorporated if not substantial (corrections, clarifications etc.) or otherwise discussed at the next committee meeting. AmCham members who submit comments may be invited to the next meeting of the relevant committee to present and discuss their comments on the position paper.

### **Stage 3 (5 working days)**

Following the incorporation of the comments received during Stage 2, the final draft is circulated to the membership for final approval. Preference is for minor adjustments, although further changes to the content can be made. Stages can be repeated until a general agreement is achieved.

### **Stage 4 (2 working days)**

A final check of quality, style and consistency is undertaken.

### **Stage 5 (Released)**

After its approval, the position paper is posted on the AmCham website, released to the general public and mailed to the main stakeholders by the Executive Office.

### **Fast-Track Procedure**

Fast-track approval of position papers must not take less than 2 working days in order to ensure transparency, and applies solely in the following circumstances:

- Normal procedure does not allow for sufficiently speedy response;

- Builds on an existing AmCham position;
- There is strong and demonstrable evidence of consensus on position.

Approval is obtained by the decision of the members of the Board as representatives of AmCham members.

### **Disagreements**

If a member company has not submitted written comments during the position paper approval process, it is considered the member company has approved the position paper. Any communicated divergence of opinion between members during the position paper approval process should, if possible, be resolved by the committee. Disagreeing member companies not represented in the committee should be invited to the next committee meeting in order to try to resolve the issue.

If unanimity is not achievable, the committee should determine whether exclusion of a particular message from the position paper may resolve the conflict, with members agreeing on the wider message of the position paper. Upon failure to reach an agreement within a reasonable time frame, the responsible committee will withdraw the position paper.

### **ADVOCACY PLAN**

Each position paper is accompanied by the advocacy plan which summarizes main recommendations, identifies the target audience and stakeholders and outlines the timing of advocacy activities and communications.

The advocacy plan is prepared by the Policy Manager and takes into account the following:

- AmCham's knowhow of the Croatian political institutions and processes;
- Already established relationships with key policy stakeholders and media professionals;
- Level of controversy and AmCham's reputational risk surrounding a policy issue;
- Recommendations of the Committee Chair/members;
- Level of importance and urgency as perceived by the Board/relevant committee.

The draft advocacy plan is prepared during Stage 1 of the position paper process and finalized once the position paper is published.

### **POLICY MANAGER**

The Policy Manager is a member of the Executive Office responsible for the day-to-day organization of all policy committees and acts as a focal point for all committee activities. In addition, the Policy Manager is responsible for organizing policy advocacy activities towards external stakeholders.

In summary, Policy Manager's main responsibilities (in cooperation with Committee Chairs, Stream Leaders and the Executive Office) include:

- Administrative organization of committee meetings – proposing dates, sending meeting invitations, preparing the meeting room, disseminating supporting documents etc.

- Maintaining committee members lists and sending/receiving Committee Sign-up Forms
- Participation in all committee and task force meetings;
- Preparation of committee meetings – agenda, speakers etc.
- Moderation of committee meetings – ensuring they have concrete conclusions/next steps
- Preparation and distribution of meeting minutes
- Coordination of work on position papers with stream leaders
- Contribution to the research and drafting of position papers if necessary
- Coordination of the position paper approval process
- Preparation of the advocacy plan for each position paper
- Identification of policy issues that may be of interest to AmCham members
- Building and maintaining relationships with government institutions and business organizations
- Organization and attendance (together with AmCham President, Executive Director, Committee Chair) of meetings with external stakeholders as per the advocacy plan
- Preparation and dissemination of quarterly policy briefs
- Organization of Policy Group meetings
- Facilitating cooperation between committees
- Responding to information requests regarding policy work by other AmCham members
- Cooperation on News & Views, Yearbook and other AmCham publications on policy topics
- Cooperation on the organization of AmCham’s policy-related events
- Regular communication with other AmChams and coordination of mutual policy initiatives
- Facilitation of common policy initiatives with other Chambers/US Embassy in Croatia

## **INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Board of Governors**

The Board is kept advised of all policy developments at the meetings of the Policy Group. The Executive Director, Policy Manager and Committee Chairs present the committees’ activities and accomplishments, so that the Board may assess whether the committees’ policy plans are in line with AmCham’s overall goals and strategy, and implemented in a timely fashion.

In addition, the Board discusses and makes decisions on policy issues during regular monthly Board meetings, when required.

### **AmCham Members**

Members are informed about AmCham's policy advocacy activities through quarterly Policy Briefs, communicated electronically in newsletter format. Specific topics and policy overviews are also included in the News & Views magazine.

The objective is both motivational and informational, with the goal of giving a sense of involvement and inspiring passion for advocacy. This gives members a chance to comment and advise the AmCham staff and committees, and should encourage direct member involvement in committees and task forces.

### **Executive Office**

AmCham staff should meet once a week to discuss policy activities and determine needed support from the team. All relevant issues should be explained and supporting documents provided when necessary by the Policy Manager.

The goal is to ensure that all staff members understand the issues, identify areas where they can contribute, and are able to speak confidently on policy issues to members and the public. Issue-specific briefings should also be scheduled when necessary, if the staff meeting doesn't provide enough time to fully explain a given issue.

### **EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

According to the AmCham Constitution, the responsible AmCham Board members and the Executive Director have the right to represent AmCham in public. This applies to the communication of policy working materials and position papers.

Therefore, communication of AmCham's position papers, working materials and opinions to any external stakeholders, including government institutions and bodies, by Committee Chairs (or other members) may take place exclusively with prior approval of the Executive Office. In case of public presentations or appearances by Committee Chairs at which AmCham's positions will be presented, the approval of the Executive Office must be obtained at least a week in advance. The Executive Office will approve the presentation of AmCham material by Committee Chair based on the description of the event at which the Committee Chair will speak, as well as the review of the material to be used/presented by the Committee Chair.

All external communication should refer to views and positions of AmCham as a whole, i.e. supported by the entire membership, rather than its separate committees. This magnifies the strength of the message and positions AmCham as an organization which takes into account the views of all its members.

### **COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

AmCham is one of the oldest international chambers in Croatia. It has strong relationships with government institutions and a wide audience. Its key asset is the AmCham brand.

AmCham is committed to further strengthening its brand by offering unique advocacy value to its membership. AmCham therefore partners with other organizations based on clear criteria, taking into account that recognition and differentiation in the business community are the key drivers of AmCham's future development and growth.

Any cooperation with other organizations must be approved by the Board and can be only arranged by the Executive Office.

Potential cooperation should meet the following criteria:

- Provides a benefit to AmCham, while not negatively impacting visibility and reputation;
- Complements AmCham's own expertise and capabilities/resources;
- Focuses on a specific topic/issue;
- Is in accordance with AmCham's strategy.

Cooperation can take place at the following stages of the policy advocacy process:

- After the publication of an AmCham's position paper or policy statement;
- Prior to AmCham starting an own initiative; i.e. starting a joint initiative.

Cooperation may not be initiated during the process of preparation of AmCham's own position papers or policy statements. Draft position papers, meeting minutes and working materials may not be shared with other organizations prior to the approval of a policy position by the entire AmCham membership.