

# STRATEGY FOR THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND THE CROATIANS OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Croatia is the result of the will of the Croatian people, established in the democratic election and the referendum, and through the joint effort in defending and building of the Republic of Croatia by both Croatians and other citizens living in the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians living outside the Republic of Croatia.

For different historical, political and economic reasons, throughout centuries, the Croatians continued to emigrate from the then Croatian lands to the neighbouring, European and overseas countries where, depending on the specific country, they now have different positions and status. Parts of the Croatian people, due to various historical and political circumstances, remain outside the borders of the Republic of Croatia, i.e. in the neighbouring states.

All the Croatians, no matter where they live and what status they enjoy, belong to one indivisible Croatian nation.

The Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia include: the Croatians in Bosnia and Herzegovina as an equal, sovereign and constituent people (**Croatians in Bosnia and Herzegovina**)<sup>1</sup>, members of the Croatian minorities in European countries (**Croatian minorities**)<sup>2</sup>, and the Croatians who emigrated overseas and to European countries and their offspring (**Croatian emigrants/diaspora**)<sup>3</sup>.

Bearing in mind the complexity and political importance of regulating the relation between the Republic of Croatia as their mother state with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, the Government of the Republic of Croatia has passed the Decision on Establishing a Commission to Prepare Draft Strategy and Law on the Relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

## 2. BASIC FOUNDATIONS

The Republic of Croatia has no specific, integral law regulating the relation between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, there are only separate or partial laws or by-laws and the general international law instruments in different areas that directly or indirectly apply to this relation.

Furthermore, in the Republic of Croatia there is no separate authority that would coordinate the operation of all the state institutions that take care of the relation with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia. There are rather some forms of institutional solutions at individual ministries and authorities, i.e. there is certain practice in dealing with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 1991 census, the Croatian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina was more than 760,852 (presently, about 400,000).

<sup>2</sup> Autochthonous Croatian minorities in 12 European countries number about 350,000 members.

<sup>3</sup> The term „Croatian emigrants“ includes Croatians who emigrated and all their offspring, i.e. its corresponds with the meaning of the term „Croatian diaspora“, and hereinafter, the term „Croatian emigrants“ will be used. It is estimated that the Croatian emigrants include about 3 million members, of whom about 2 million live overseas.

In accordance with this Strategy, a new specific law will be passed, a central authority in charge will be established as well as a consultative Government Council, and the existing legal solutions will be adjusted accordingly.

## 2.1. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

- The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (specifically Article 10) is the highest legal foundation for the development of the Strategy:  
*The Republic of Croatia shall protect the rights and interests of its citizens who live and stay abroad and shall promote their ties to their home country. Parts of the Croatian people in other states shall be guaranteed special care and protection by the Republic of Croatia.*
- The international law foundation of this Strategy lies in the bilateral agreements between the Republic of Croatia and the relevant countries as well as in the general international law instruments<sup>4</sup>, i.e. the recognition and inalienability of the basic human and civil rights, from which derives the right to the protection and preservation of cultural variety and the right of minority communities to preserve their identity in culture and language, education and information, with the full implementation of the principle of non-interference between states.

## 2.2. STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

The development\* of this Strategy is also based on and in conformity with the strategic development documents of the Republic of Croatia:

- *Strategic Development Framework 2006-2013*, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia at its meeting on 4 August 2006.<sup>5</sup>
- *Strategy of Government Programs 2010 – 2012*, adopted at the meeting on 10 September 2009, setting the main goals and instruments for further social and economic development of Croatia.<sup>6</sup>
- *Strategy of Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia 30/2009) adopted by the Croatian Parliament at its meeting on 20 February 2009.<sup>7</sup>

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\* The development of this Strategy was harmonised with the instruction of the Ministry of Finance concerning the development of strategic plans (18.03.2009).

<sup>4</sup> *Instruments for the protection of national minorities:*

-UN Charter, General Declaration of the Rights of Man, International Convention on the Abolishment of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities;

-Relevant documents adopted by the OSCE, the Document of the Conference on Human Dimension, Copenhagen, 1990, Reports of Government Experts on Minority Protection, Geneva, 1991;

-European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and other relevant documents of the Council of Europe;

-Instrument of the Central European Initiative for the Protection of National Minorities.

<sup>5</sup> (...) *The Strategic Development Framework determines the priorities and activities the implementation of which in the next seven years will secure stable growth, employment and better standard of living.*

<sup>6</sup> *Extract from the Strategy of Government Programs 2010 – 2012:*

(...) *The Government of the Republic of Croatia will by means of specific measures encourage **Croatian emigrants** to invest in the development of new production.*

(...) *The development of the program to fund scientific projects will enable (...) attracting capable and affirmed scientists **from the diaspora** and the world.*

(...) *In the next period, Croatian diplomats will work on further professionalisation and modernisation of the diplomatic network to even better suit the needs of the citizens at home and abroad, to protect all the Croatian citizens both individual persons and members of the **Croatian minorities and the diaspora.***

(...) *Croatian diplomats will pay special attention to the implementation of the existing agreements related to the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, particularly as concerns (...) the protection of minorities and the protection of the **constituent character of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina**, and other commitments assumed.*

<sup>7</sup> (...) *Sustainable development assumes the realisation of three general goals: stable economic development, just distribution of social opportunities and environmental protection.*

### **3. VISION**

The Republic of Croatia, in meeting its constitutional obligations, constantly makes effort to develop just society, to achieve sustainable economic development, and to protect the rights and interests of all the Croatian citizens, both in the Republic of Croatia and outside it, and to guarantee special care and protection to parts of the Croatian people in other states.

New conditions such as the economic and social development of Croatian society, the global market economy, knowledge society, social justice, global developments and commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration, place new challenges before the Republic of Croatia as well as new demands that include the reinforcement of cooperation with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

With this Strategy the Republic of Croatia wants to effectively bring together the entire Croatian society and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia primarily through the realisation of the **Croatian cultural unity**<sup>8</sup> through a number of cultural and other social activities relevant to the preservation and strengthening Croatian identity and prosperity.

The Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia are the most natural social and cultural factors in the promotion and international affirmation of Croatian society and culture on the European and global levels.

This Strategy is part of the strategy for the development of Croatian society and is of the national interest to the Republic of Croatia.

### **4. MISSION**

With this Strategy the Republic of Croatia will create conditions for building effective and systematic cooperation between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

The Strategy and all things related constitute a means to determine the principles, goals and activities of the national policy towards the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia. It is integral part of the home and foreign policies of the Republic of Croatia and a collection of all the political, diplomatic, economic, cultural, social, educational, information, organisational and other measures and activities implemented by the President of the Republic of Croatia, the Croatian Parliament and the Government of the Republic of Croatia, as well as many other institutions, in order to achieve the goals set.

Areas of activity within the home and foreign policies regulated in the Strategy include **culture and art, preservation of the Croatian language, science, education and sport, health care, economic and regional cooperation, the media, demography and other areas of interest.**

With this Strategy the Republic of Croatia is trying to create appropriate materials, social and political conditions for the successful development of the Croatian language and culture and the preservation of the Croatian identity of the Croatians outside the borders of the Republic of Croatia.

The Republic of Croatia will in cooperation with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia take care of the material and immaterial cultural heritage of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

Since the Croatian communities throughout the world find themselves in varying positions and have different needs and possibilities, the Republic of Croatia will adjust its approach to every single

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<sup>8</sup> „Croatian cultural unity“ implies the bringing together all the Croatians, both in the Republic of Croatia and outside the Republic of Croatia in the broadest sense of culture, language and customs, education, science, sport, information and other areas essential to preserving the national identity.

Croatian community accordingly, respecting its specific situation. The Republic of Croatia will in its relation with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia bear in mind that there are communities and individuals with a good position who are well integrated in the society of the state in which they live, as well as that there are communities and individuals who are not adequately integrated. Accordingly, the Republic of Croatia will prioritize the measures to undertake either by focusing on the preservation of the Croatian language and culture, and the economic and any other advanced cooperation, or on protecting and supporting them, including the assistance in returning to the Republic of Croatia and integrating in Croatian society.

This Strategy intends to strengthen Croatian communities outside the Republic of Croatia and their position and role in the settings where they live, and to create conditions for their inclusion in the general social and political life of the Republic of Croatia.

For the optimum development of the Republic of Croatia it is necessary to include all the human resources of all the Croatians, the ones in the Republic of Croatia and the ones outside the Republic of Croatia.

## **5. GOALS**

The basic strategic goals are the preservation, strengthening and development of the Croatian cultural unity and the economic and general progress, both of the Croatians in the Republic of Croatia and of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia. To achieve this, the following general and specific goals have been set\*.

### **5.1. PUTTING IN PLACE A NEW LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AS THE BASIS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY**

#### **5.1.1. Prepare and pass the Law on Relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia**

On the basis of the Strategy, the Government of the Republic of Croatia will propose the adoption of the *Law on the Relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia* to regulate the activities included in this Strategy and ensure the adjustment of the state administrative bodies and the Croatian Emigrants Association<sup>9</sup> as well as the existing legislation.

#### **5.1.2. Establish a central authority in charge of the relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia**

On the basis of the Strategy and the appropriate legal framework, the Government of the Republic of Croatia will set up a central authority in charge of the relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: the Central Authority) that will have the powers and responsibility to monitor and coordinate the activities and strengthen the ties between the state administrative bodies, the Croatian Emigrants Association and other

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\*The goals are divided into groups as „general goals“ (e.g. 5.1.) that include sub-groups or „specific goals“ (e.g. 5.1.2.) that constitute the basis for the development of the Law.

<sup>9</sup> The Croatian Emigrants Association as the institution with the longest tradition among the emigrants and autochthonous Croatian minorities in the European countries, and among the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its operation and programs has its place in the implementation of the Strategy in the areas of culture and art, the preservation of the Croatian language, the education and exchange of pupils and students, sport, regional cooperation, culture tourism, the media etc.

authorities and associations in the Republic of Croatia with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

It will have the powers and responsibility to develop and propose projects and guidelines (implementation plans) and to implement them effectively (funding and supervision) as well as to evaluate the results of the implementation of the Strategy.

Once a year it will submit a report to the Croatian Parliament on the implementation of the Strategy and the Law on the Relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

### **5.1.3. Establish the Council of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia**

On the basis of the Strategy and the appropriate legal framework, the Government of the Republic of Croatia will set up the *Council of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia*, a consulting body to support the Government of the Republic of Croatia in creating and implementing the policy, the activities and programs concerning the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

The Council will at least once a year discuss matters of the interest to the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and the implementation of the Strategy.

The Council will include representatives of the associations, organizations and institutions of all the three groups of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, representatives of state authorities and institutions, as well as representatives of the civil society from the Republic of Croatia.

Through the Council the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia will participate in the creation of the policy and programs concerning them. The composition, ratio and election of representatives to the Council will be determined in the Law.

## **5.2. PROTECT THE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS OF THE CROATIANS OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND STRENGTHEN THEIR COMMUNITIES**

The Republic of Croatia cares for the preservation of the national identity of all the generations of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia. It is the interest of the Republic of Croatia to cooperate with all the forms of organization of the Croatians world-wide (associations, organizations, institutions, cultural centres, Croatian Catholic missions etc.) as well as to support any such institutions with a view to promoting the Croatian language, cultural and scientific, economic and other cooperation. In supporting these communities the Republic of Croatia contributes to their development and better position in the countries where they live and encourages their development within the framework of the Croatian cultural unity.

In the next period, Croatian diplomats will work in accordance with the Strategy to modernize and adjust the diplomatic network with a view to protecting all the Croatian citizens and Croatians living outside the Republic of Croatia.

Special attention will be devoted to strengthening their position and treatment when in the Republic of Croatia, which will be reflected in the introduction of additional legal institutes and facilities and various forms of financial support.

***Croatians in Bosnia and Herzegovina*** – The Republic of Croatia cares for the preservation of the constitutional status of the Croatians in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Special attention will be devoted

to the implementation of the existing international agreements and the conclusion of new ones, for the sake of the survival and protection of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>10</sup>. The connection with the Croatians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the support for their return and stay in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the preservation of their full equality, are of the strategic interest to the Republic of Croatia. Likewise, it is the interest of the Republic of Croatia to nurture good neighbourly relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and to support Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path to Euro-Atlantic integration.

***Croatian minorities*** – The Republic of Croatia systematically cares for the status of the Croatian national minorities in the European states and the exercise of their minority rights in accordance with international law. Special attention will be devoted to the implementation of the existing bilateral agreements for the protection of the Croatian minorities. In implementing the existing and concluding new bilateral agreements, the Republic of Croatia will seek that the standards be met and reciprocity respected in order to secure the survival and protect the rights of the Croatian national minorities in the European countries as are enjoyed by the national minorities in the Republic of Croatia.<sup>11</sup>

***Croatian emigrants*** – Care for the Croatian emigrants includes among other things the preservation of the national identity of all the generations of the Croatian emigrants and strengthening various facets of relations (political, economic and cultural) between the Croatian emigrants and the Croatian population in the Republic of Croatia. The Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia who live in difficult economic and political circumstances in the states to which they emigrated will be provided protection and assistance by the Republic of Croatia, including the assistance to return to the Republic of Croatia and integrate into Croatian society, in accordance with the means available.

### **5.2.1. Strengthen the status of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia**

***Speed up admission to Croatian citizenship*** – In accordance with the Law on Croatian Citizenship (Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia 53/91, 70/91, 28/92, 113/93 and 4/94) and its necessary amendments, the Republic of Croatia will in the submission and processing of applications simplify, facilitate and speed up admission to Croatian citizenship for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and their offspring. In this, their declaration as belonging to the Croatian people in the states where they live (e.g. separate lists of the voters of national minorities) will be taken into account.

***Introduce the status of the Croatians without Croatian citizenship*** – In order to achieve a turnabout in regard of the assimilation trends affecting some Croatian communities throughout the world, it is necessary to create a new administrative framework within which conditions would be created to connect the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians who do not have Croatian citizenship. The Republic of Croatia will, therefore, in its Law and the prescribed procedure introduce the *status of the Croatians without Croatian citizenship*, as a guarantee of the survival of the Croatian communities outside the Republic of Croatia, particularly those living in the countries where no dual citizenship is allowed. The same status may be acquired by their spouses without Croatian roots and by the friends of the Croatian people and the Republic of Croatia who express their desire to have the Croatian identity and participate in the promotion of the Croatian cultural unity.

The persons accorded the status of the Croatians without Croatian citizenship will be entitled to simpler enrolment requirements at the schools and colleges/universities in the Republic of

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<sup>10</sup> In proportion to their pre-war numbers, the Croatian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina suffered the most during the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and the ethnic cleansing. It is estimated that from the area of the „Republic of Srpska“ alone about 220,000 Croatians were driven away.

<sup>11</sup> The Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities guarantees a high level of rights to the national minorities in the Republic of Croatia. In the Strategy of the Government Programs 2010–2012 it is also noted that the Republic of Croatia enables the exercise of the rights of all the national minorities in the Republic of Croatia and that all the legal conditions have been created for the full implementation of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of the National Minorities.

Croatia, to the acquisition of real property<sup>12</sup>, they will have the opportunity to apply for jobs, to participate in specific competitions and receive scholarships, as well as to apply for financial support for the Croatian communities outside the Republic of Croatia, enjoying more favourable requirements for obtaining visas, temporary stay approval, and work and business permits, respectively.

***Introduce facilities for the Croatians without Croatian citizenship even without the above-mentioned status*** – In accordance with the Law on Aliens (Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia 79/2007 and 36/2009) and its necessary amendments, for the members of the Croatian people without Croatian citizenship and the appropriate status, the Republic of Croatia will simplify and speed up the procedure for obtaining a visa, temporary stay, and work and business permits. It will also make available to them specific competitions and scholarships in education and culture.

***Provide facilities for tourist stays in the Republic of Croatia*** – The Republic of Croatia will, in cooperation with the interested institutions and business entities introduce the so-called „CRO Card“ that will enable the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia to more easily access particular services on their tourist visits, journeys, stays and participation in cultural events, with a view to developing the project of the Republic of Croatia as a tourist destination.

### **5.2.2. Preserve the Croatian language, culture and identity among the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia**

***Preserve the Croatian language*** – The Republic of Croatia will enable the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia to learn the Croatian language and attend the entry-level semesters in the study of the Croatian language in the Republic of Croatia free of charge, and it will encourage attendance of the Croatian classes in foreign countries. Through e-learning in support of the Croatian language classes in foreign countries it will also improve the accessibility and quality of learning Croatian. The Republic of Croatia will encourage the establishment of a lectorship for the Croatian language and literature at foreign colleges and universities as well as the establishment of Croatian departments at universities in foreign countries.

***Preserve the Croatian culture and identity*** – Aiming to ensure the survival of the Croatian communities outside the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Croatia will support all the forms of their organisation to promote and preserve their identity and culture. Accordingly, it will financially support the programs and projects of such forms of organisations of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatian minorities in the European countries, and the Croatian emigrants/diaspora.

Appropriate funds for scholarship for pupils and students will be separately provided in their local communities and in the Republic of Croatia, with a view to improving the knowledge and the intellectual potentials of their communities.

### **5.2.3. Encourage Croatian communities outside the Republic of Croatia to participate in the local social and political life**

It is in the interest of the Republic of Croatia to permanently strengthen the status of the Croatian communities outside the Republic of Croatia as a bridge for cooperation between the states in which they live and the Republic of Croatia. It will particularly support the Croatians in the exercise of their rights through the promotion of cooperation with the local institutions and authorities in the countries in which they live, and the encouragement of the intercultural dialogue.

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<sup>12</sup> Applies mostly to the members of the Croatian people living overseas, considering that since 1 February 2009 the citizens and legal persons from the EU Member States may acquire real property in the Republic of Croatia without any special conditions. Notably, the same conditions that apply to Croatian citizens acquiring real property are also applicable to them, except in case of the acquisition of farming land and protected areas of nature.

#### **5.2.4. Actively include the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia in the social and political life of the Republic of Croatia**

The inclusion of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia in the social and political life of the Republic of Croatia is an important prerequisite to creating closer ties and mutual respect and understanding in all social areas.

The Republic of Croatia ensures the representation of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia in the Croatian Parliament and thus includes them in the political life of the Republic of Croatia and supports the exercise of their rights and interests.

Furthermore, through the Council of the Government of the Republic of Croatia the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia will participate in the creation of the policy, activities and programs concerning them.

The interested institutions, associations and individuals will also be able to propose their candidates to the Program Council of the Croatian Radio and Television in conformity with the CRT Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia 137/2010), with a view to harmonising the radio and television programs and broadcasting services of the interest to the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

In order to strengthen the relations with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Croatia will establish and celebrate the „Day of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia“.

#### **5.2.5. Strengthen Croatian communities through information and connection**

Mutual information and strengthening the ties between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia are the prerequisites to the cultural, economic and any other cooperation. The bulletins of the Central Authority and related institutions, and the public media and the Internet technologies will be of the key importance in the Republic of Croatia connecting to and communicating with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

***Information through the Central Authority*** – The Central Authority will inform the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and the public through its website and appropriate publications and through direct communication. The Central Authority will have a spokesperson to provide the necessary information for the media in the Republic of Croatia and to the media of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

***Connecting all the state administrative bodies and the local and regional self-government*** – For the sake of effective information of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, the Central Authority will develop an administrative and communication network among the state bodies, the Croatian Emigrants Association and other institutions in the Republic of Croatia, including the diplomatic missions and consular posts of the Republic of Croatia, as the first administrative contact points of the Republic of Croatia in the relation with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

***Media*** – Croatian Radio and Television, as a public institution, pursuant to its legal obligations, will prepare the plan and program of the operation of the radio and television shows, the broadcasting schedule, and will make allowances for the needs of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, in conformity with the goals set in this Strategy.

### **5.3. DEVELOP COOPERATION WITH THE CROATIANS OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

With a view to strengthening and developing cooperation with individuals, associations and institutions of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia within the framework of the Croatian cultural unity, the Republic of Croatia will, in accordance with this Strategy and its foreign policy, through the authorities in charge, develop and support the cooperation in culture, education, science, sport, business, politics etc..

#### **5.3.1. Cultural cooperation**

With the already mentioned measures and activities to strengthen the communities of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia in culture, the Republic of Croatia will improve on this relation through connecting the associations and cultural institutions from the Republic of Croatia with the associations and institutions of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, and among themselves.

The Republic of Croatia will also encourage the exchange of the Croatian cultural activities and heritage created in the local communities between the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Croatia.

The Republic of Croatia will, through mutual cooperation encourage the establishment of the Croatian culture institutes/centres in the countries where Croatian communities live.

#### **5.3.2. Educational and scientific cooperation**

In addition to the already mentioned measures and activities in strengthening the communities of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia in education and science, the Republic of Croatia will improve on this relation through connecting the domestic educational and scientific institutions and individuals with the Croatian associations, institutions and individuals outside the Republic of Croatia for the sake of the mutual cooperation and utilisation of the potentials of the Croatian scientists and experts. The project is focused on uniting the Croatian scientific and professional potentials at home and abroad in order to build the knowledge society as one of the key factors in the social and economic development of the Republic of Croatia.

The Central Authority will encourage the networking of the Croatian alumni outside the Republic of Croatia.

#### **5.3.3. Economic cooperation**

It is the interest of the Republic of Croatia to cooperate and connect with all the countries of the world, particularly those where Croatian communities live. The Croatians living in such countries can play a very important role in this. In the spirit of this Strategy and the Sustainable Development Strategy, the Republic of Croatia will advance its relations with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, and special measures will be put in place to encourage the Croatian emigrants to invest and produce in the Republic of Croatia.

In order to acquire new markets and promote Croatian products and services the Republic of Croatia will encourage cooperation with Croatian businessmen world-wide to boost its exports. In cooperation with Croatian businessmen outside the Republic of Croatia it will specifically create development projects for underdeveloped areas or areas of special government concern.

In cooperation with the Ministry for Economic Affairs, Labour and Entrepreneurship, the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, the Croatian Chamber of Trades, and the Croatian commercial diplomats, the Central Authority will encourage connections between Croatian businessmen and foreign Chambers of Commerce.

As a form of the economic cooperation with the Croats in the neighbouring and surrounding countries, the Republic of Croatia will encourage regional/transborder cooperation through its assistance in applying for the funds of the European Union, and will encourage the adjustment of the existing and the establishment of the appropriate economic and financial institutions (foundations and micro loans) as financing form.

***Systematically keeping specific records and statistics*** – As a prerequisite to monitoring the status of the economic ties and investment in the Republic of Croatia by the Croats outside the Republic of Croatia, and to encouraging mutual cooperation, it is necessary to:

- Prepare an address book of Croatian businessmen in the world and the address book of returned and immigrated Croatian businessmen,
- Prepare records about the investment of the Croats outside the Republic of Croatia and about the investment by Croatian returnees and immigrants,
- Prepare records about the cash remittances of the Croats outside the Republic of Croatia,
- Monitor the foreign trade balance with the countries where the Croats outside the Republic of Croatia live,
- In the acquisition or registration of a business entity in the Republic of Croatia make a note when the owner or founder is a Croat outside the Republic of Croatia, being a returnee or an external investor.

In the Republic of Croatia the above-mentioned records and address books are presently not kept, so the Republic of Croatia will see to the necessary amendments to the legislation by the authorities and institutions in charge making them available to the Central Authority in conformity with the Law on Personal data Protection (Official Gazette 103/2003, 118/2006 and 41/2008).

#### **5.3.4. Encourage scientific research into Croatian migrations**

The Republic of Croatia will encourage research into the Croatian emigrants, Croatian minorities in foreign countries and the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and establish a documentary centre and museum for the historical documents and publications of the Croats outside the Republic of Croatia.

Scientific research on the subject of Croatian migrations will be supported in cooperation with expatriate scientists, in order to prepare an authentic presentation of the causes of the emigration, qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the external migrations and the evaluation of the mindset and conditions for a return.

The State Bureau of Statistics will monitor and collect the information about the Croats outside the Republic of Croatia, as well as about Croatian returnees and immigrants in cooperation with the authorities in charge in the Republic of Croatia and foreign state bureaus of statistics.

#### **5.4. ENCOURAGE THE RETURN OF CROATIAN EMIGRANTS AND THEIR OFFSPRING TO THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

Demographic renewal is the condition of survival of the Croatian nation and it is one of the priorities of the Croatian policy in redefining the immigration policy of the Republic of Croatia. The measures for the demographic renewal and development also include the ones aiming at the

return of Croatian emigrants and the immigration of their offspring, with the simultaneous reduction in the emigration from the Republic of Croatia.

In regulating the immigration policy with the clear goals to promote humane, social, demographic, cultural and economic interests, the return of the Croatian emigrants and their offspring modelled on other immigration countries will become a priority.

To materialize our joint interests, the Republic of Croatia wants to create conditions for the sustainable return of the Croatians who have acquired the knowledge, skills and experience abroad.

Developing a strategy to populate the sparsely populated areas of the Republic of Croatia is integral part of this Strategy.

**Customs and tax reliefs** – The Republic of Croatia will, in accordance with the Strategy, provide customs reliefs in importing household items and business inventory on immigrating to the Republic of Croatia. There will also be special tax reliefs for Croatian returnees/immigrants, natural and legal persons, upon their taking up residence and engaging in business in the Republic of Croatia.

**Programs for quicker integration** – In addition to all the mentioned programs for quick integration in the Republic of Croatia<sup>13</sup>, the Central Authority will also introduce the program of monitoring through „mentors/counsellors“ who will monitor the process of integration of the immigrants and the exercise of their rights for a specified period of time.

#### **5.4.1. Attract established scientists**

Pursuant to the Strategy of Government Programs 2010 – 2012, the Government of the Republic of Croatia will through the development of the program for funding scientific projects make it possible to further attract capable and established scientists of the Croatian origin from all over the world. It will encourage the return of and cooperation with Croatian scientists outside the Republic of Croatia in scientific research projects.

A permanent program of „virtual mentorship“ between the students and teachers and Croatian scientists and businessmen world-wide will be put in place with a view to transferring the necessary knowhow.

#### **5.4.2. Attract pupils and students**

The Republic of Croatia is conducting programs for Croatian language teaching in Croatia, awards scholarships to pupils and students of the Croatian origin who go to school or study in the Republic of Croatia, and assists with their accommodation in pupils or student homes.

Universities will be encouraged to determine enrolment quotas for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia in order to simplify and speed up the enrolment in colleges and universities. The rights concerning the school fees, board and lodgings will be fully equalized with the rights of the pupils and students from the Republic of Croatia.

The Republic of Croatia will be encouraged to approach the young emigrants through the programs developed for their visit to the Republic of Croatia. These programs include Croatian language schools for all age groups, various cultural and educational programs, the professional practice and seasonal work of pupils and students. Croatian educational institutions will be encouraged to develop and support the projects of pupils and student exchange based on reciprocity.

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<sup>13</sup> Learning Croatian, scholarships for pupils and students, various facilities etc.

### **5.4.3. Realize projects for the employment of Croatian returnees in accordance with the needs of the labour market**

In accordance with this Strategy the Croatian Employment Office will ensure availability of structured records about the labour market demand in the Republic of Croatia, and the Central Authority and the diplomatic network will ensure that this information is passed on to the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

The Ministry for Economic Affairs, Labour and Entrepreneurship will, in cooperation with the Croatian Employment Office, develop and conduct projects for the employment of Croatian returnees and immigrants in accordance with the needs and possibilities of the Republic of Croatia and in accordance with the goals of the Strategy.

### **5.4.4. Facilitate the return of the retired and other persons**

Through the international social security agreements concluded and taken over and the necessary amendments to the relevant legislation, the Republic of Croatia will implement models for the exercise of the rights from the pension and health insurance of the returnees and immigrants. It will encourage negotiations on international social security agreements with the countries with which the Republic of Croatia has no bilateral agreements, or on the improvement of the existing agreements.

Through its diplomatic and consular network the Republic of Croatia will also monitor the status of the communities and individuals who are **not adequately integrated** in the countries where they live, and when necessary it will protect and assist them under **specific terms** including the assistance to return to the Republic of Croatia and integrate in Croatian society.

## **6. IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING OF THE STRATEGY**

### **6.1. IMPLEMENTATION**

The implementation of this Strategy is obligatory for all the state administrative bodies that directly or indirectly conduct activities related to the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia. The Strategy will be implemented in accordance with laws and by-laws and, when necessary, in accordance with action plans<sup>14</sup>. The authorities in charge are obliged to submit regular reports on the implementation of the Strategy to the Central Authority that coordinates the activities and areas of relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

The Central Authority will coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Strategy and the relevant legislation, submitting regular annual reports to the Croatian Parliament.

### **6.2. FUNDING**

For the implementation of this Strategy funds will be allocated from the national budget within the limits of the total expenditures that the Government of the Republic of Croatia determines in the guidelines of the economic and fiscal policies. The implementation of this Strategy can partly be funded from other sources (donations etc.). In providing financial assistance the Republic of Croatia will attach importance to the fact that the beneficiaries should act in

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<sup>14</sup> Action plans would include descriptions of particular tasks with their purposes, goals, activities, results planned, indicators, facilitators, beneficiaries, schedule, funds and other means and the sources of funds necessary for their implementation.

accordance with the basic principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and that the balance between the state support and own funding be respected. Financial assistance may also be received by the factors that are active in the Republic of Croatia in connecting and caring for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia. The implementation of the financial support of the Republic of Croatia includes the development of planned activities, monitoring the effects and controlling the spending.

### **6.3. TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS**

Upon the adoption of the Strategy and the Law on the Relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, goal 5.1. *Put in place a new legislative and institutional framework as the basis for the implementation of the Strategy* will be considered fulfilled, and further activities will be directed towards the realization of the remaining goals of the Strategy: 5.2. *Protect the rights and interests of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and strengthen their communities*, 5.3. *Develop cooperation with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia*, and 5.4. *Encourage the return of Croatian emigrants and their offspring to the Republic of Croatia*.

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