

THE CROATIAN PARLIAMENT

2471

Pursuant to Article 89 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, I hereby issue the

DECISION

PROMULGATING THE ACT ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND THE CROATIANS OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

I hereby promulgate the Act on the Relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatsians outside the Republic of Croatia passed by the Croatian Parliament at its session on 21 October 2011.

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Zagreb, 26 October 2011

The President of the Republic of Croatia
Ivo Josipović, m. p.

ACT

ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND THE CROATIANS OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

This Act regulates the relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatsians outside the Republic of Croatia, establishes the Central State Office for the Croatsians outside the Republic of Croatia and the Council of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Croatsians outside the Republic of Croatia, introduces the status of the Croatian without Croatian citizenship, regulates the relations between the bodies having within their scope of activity operations related to the Croatsians outside the Republic of Croatia, the protection of rights and interests of the Croatsians outside the Republic of Croatia and the strengthening of their communities, lays down the method for developing cooperation with the Croatsians outside the Republic of Croatia, measures and activities relating to return and immigration, and other issues relevant for the Croatsians outside the Republic of Croatia.

Article 2

For the purposes of this Act, the term Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia shall have the following meaning:

- members of the sovereign and constituent Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: Croatians in Bosnia and Herzegovina),
- members of the Croatian minorities in European countries (hereinafter: Croatian minorities),
- Croatians who emigrated overseas and to European countries and their offspring (hereinafter: Croatian emigrants/diaspora).

Article 3

This Act shall apply to the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia:

- having Croatian citizenship,
- having the “status of the Croatian without Croatian citizenship” (hereinafter: status), and
- not having Croatian citizenship or the status.

Article 4

The Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia shall be an equal part of one and indivisible Croatian nation.

Article 5

With the aim of promoting the relations with the Republic of Croatia, and in line with the obligations assumed pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and the Strategy for the Relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: the Strategy), the Republic of Croatia shall base its relations with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia on mutual cooperation and on providing assistance and strengthening their communities, taking into consideration all diversities and different needs of Croatian communities outside the Republic of Croatia.

Article 6

Care for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia shall be an integral part of the home and foreign policies of the Republic of Croatia.

The Republic of Croatia shall intercede for the implementation of all bilateral and multilateral international agreements and other international instruments protecting the interests, rights and the position of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

The Republic of Croatia shall intercede for the recognition and strengthening of the position of the Croatian minorities in the countries in which they live.

The Republic of Croatia shall intercede for full achievement of equality and constitutiveness of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Republic of Croatia shall, by means of its own legislation, take measures and activities for the strengthening of the position of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia in the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

Article 7

The Republic of Croatia shall intercede for the preservation and strengthening of the position and identity of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia through language learning, culture, education, science, economy, health care and social policy and sports.

The Republic of Croatia shall take measures to encourage return of Croatian emigrants and the immigration of their offspring to the Republic of Croatia.

The Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia shall have all rights and obligations regulated by special regulations in the area of schooling and university education, employment, competitions and scholarships, health insurance, and other.

The competent ministers shall issue ordinances for the achievement of the rights referred to in paragraph 3 of this Article.

Article 8

The Republic of Croatia shall enable the inclusion of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia in the social and political life of the Republic of Croatia.

Article 9

The Republic of Croatia shall bring together all the Croatians, both those in the Republic of Croatia and those outside the Republic of Croatia, in the achievement of the Croatian cultural unity through cultural, educational, scientific, information, economic, sports and other social activities relevant for the preservation and strengthening of the Croatian identity and prosperity.

Article 10

The Croatian Parliament, at the proposal of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, shall pass a decision proclaiming the „Day of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia“.

Article 11

The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall award special recognitions to meritorious persons, associations and institutions for outstanding contribution to the strengthening of relations and cooperation between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall lay down in a regulation the criteria for awarding recognitions, titles and proponents of recognitions.

II. COMPETENT AUTHORITIES FOR RELATIONS AND COOPERATION

The Central State Office for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia

Article 12

The Central State Office for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: the Office) shall be set up as a central state administration body competent for the relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

Article 13

The Office's scope of activities shall be the following:

- coordination and monitoring of the activities between the competent ministries, other state administration bodies and other competent authorities for cooperation between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,
- care for the protection of rights and interests of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,
- care for the preservation and strengthening of the identity of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,
- establishment, maintenance and promotion of the relations with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,
- strengthening of cooperation with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and elaboration of the communication strategy for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,
- in cooperation with other competent ministries, carrying out activities relating to the creation of conditions for the return of emigrants/diaspora to the Republic of Croatia and their inclusion in the economic and social life in the Republic of Croatia,
- proposing a policy of encouraging of and assistance in the return and immigration,
- conducting measures and programmes for integration of Croatian returnees and immigrants,
- providing assistance in business investments,
- economic support for the return and sustainable survival of the Croatians as a constituent people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the Croatian minorities in the Republic of Serbia, Montenegro and the Republic of Kosovo,
- economic support for other Croatian communities if necessary,
- implementation of the Strategy and proposing projects and implementation plans, and monitoring their implementation,
- keeping stipulated records on the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,

- planning and ensuring financial means to the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia for programmes and projects, and
- other activities regulated by a special law.

Article 14

The work of the Office shall be managed by a state secretary appointed by the Government of the Republic of Croatia at the proposal of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, and he/she shall be responsible for his /her work to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia.

The state secretary shall have three deputies for the areas of culture, education, science and sport, for economy, and for status issues and legal position of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

Advisors with a special position shall be appointed in the Office for the issues of the Croatians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatian minorities and Croatian emigrants/diaspora.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall specify the internal organisation and other issues relevant for the work of the Office by a regulation.

Article 15

The Office shall prepare annual reports on the implementation of the Strategy and of the Act on the Relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia which shall be submitted to the Croatian Parliament.

Other competent authorities for relations and cooperation

Article 16

Other competent authorities for relations and cooperation shall be:

- the Council of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,
- ministries competent for foreign affairs, internal affairs, science, education, sports, culture, economy, health care, social welfare, tourism, regional development and finances,
- the Committee of the Croatian Parliament for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,
- the Croatian Heritage Foundation, and
- other bodies and institutions having within their scope of activity operations related to the relations with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia or whose activity could be of interest to the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

The Council of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia

Article 17

The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall establish the Council for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: the Council).

The Council shall be an advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia which shall provide assistance to the Government of the Republic of Croatia in creating and implementing the policy, activities and programmes concerning the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

Article 18

The members of the Council shall be the representatives of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and members by virtue of the office.

The members of the Council from among the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia shall be the representatives of associations, organisations and institutions of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, persons respected in the settings in which they live, engaged in the preservation and strengthening of the Croatian identity of their communities and in the strengthening of the relations with the Croatian homeland.

The members of the Council by virtue of the office shall be the representatives of state bodies and institutions, the Catholic Church and civil society organisations.

Article 19

The communities of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia shall propose their representatives to the Council from the most significant and most numerous associations, organisations, institutions or other forms of organisation (e.g. from the Croatian World Congress, and other), for a term of four years.

The representation of the representatives of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia in the Council shall be determined in accordance with the number and significance of the Croatians in a particular country, activity and ties of the community with the Republic of Croatia, and its work on the affirmation of the reputation and interests of the Republic of Croatia, as follows:

- nine members shall be representatives of the Croatians from Bosnia and Herzegovina, out of whom one representative of the Catholic Church from Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- seventeen members shall be representatives of the Croatian minorities,
- twenty-nine members shall be representatives of the Croatian emigrants/diaspora.

Article 20

The number of the Council members, representatives of the Croatian minorities, by country, shall be as follows:

- three from Serbia,

- two from Austria, Hungary and Slovenia each,
- one from Bulgaria, Montenegro, the Czech Republic, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia each.

Article 21

The number of the Council members, representatives of the Croatian emigrants/diaspora, by country, shall be as follows:

- five from the United States of America,
- three from Australia, Canada and the Federal Republic of Germany each,
- two from Argentina and Chile each,
- one from Austria, Brazil, France, Italy, South Africa, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom each,
- one collectively for Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway,
- one collectively for Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Article 22

The Council members by virtue of the office shall be as follows:

- the state secretary of the Office and his/her deputies managing the work of the services,
- state secretaries in the ministries competent for foreign affairs, internal affairs, science, education, sports, culture, economy, health care, social welfare, tourism, regional development and finances,
- representatives in the Croatian Parliament who represent the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,
- the director of the Croatian Heritage Foundation,
- representatives of the university community,
- the director of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics,
- a representative of the Croatian Radio and Television,
- a representative of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts,
- a representative of the Catholic Church (director of international Croatian pastoral work),
- a representative of the National and University Library,

- a representative of scientific institutions dealing with the issues of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,
- representatives of the Croatian Chamber of Economy and the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts,
- a representative of the Croatian Employers' Association,
- a representative of non-governmental associations which within their scope of activities promote development of relations with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia (e.g.: the “Prsten” association and others).

Article 23

The Council members, representatives of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, shall be appointed by the Government of the Republic of Croatia at the proposal of the Croatian communities from the countries they come from.

Article 24

The Council may invite to its sessions the highest representatives of the governmental authorities of the Republic of Croatia, ministers and other persons relevant for the work of the Council.

Article 25

The President of the Council shall be appointed at the proposal and from among the ranks of the representatives of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

The election of the President and other issues relevant for the organisation and work of the Council shall be regulated by the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

Article 26

The Council shall submit reports to the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the standpoints taken and conclusions made.

Article 27

The first session of the Council shall be summoned by the state secretary of the Office.

The first session shall be presided by the oldest member of the Council.

At the first session, the Council members shall elect the President and four Vice-presidents who shall be representatives of the Croatians from Bosnia and Herzegovina, of the Croatian minorities, of the Croatian emigrants/diaspora from European countries and of the Croatian emigrants/diaspora from overseas countries.

At the first session, the Council shall adopt the Rules of Procedure by two-thirds majority vote of the members with the right to vote.

The Council members by virtue of the office shall participate in the work of the Council without the right to vote.

Article 28

The Council shall meet at least once a year in the Republic of Croatia.

The Council shall discuss regularly the implementation of the Strategy and the Act on the Relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and other issues of interest for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

Article 29

Administrative and technical activities for the Council shall be conducted by the Office.

Competent ministries

Article 30

The competent ministries having within their scope of activity the operations related to the relations with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia shall be obliged to coordinate those operations with the Office.

The ministry competent for foreign affairs, in cooperation with the Office, shall take care of the status of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, and shall establish, maintain and promote relations with all forms of their organisation in the countries in which they live.

Committee for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia

Article 31

The Committee for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, as a relevant working body of the Croatian Parliament, shall be in charge of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and, in conducting the activities within its scope, shall cooperate with the Office and the Council with a view of achieving the goals of this Act and the Strategy.

The Committee for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia shall invite the state secretary of the Office to its sessions, if necessary.

The Croatian Heritage Foundation

Article 32

The Croatian Heritage Foundation shall be focused with its activities to the preservation and development of the Croatian national, linguistic and cultural identity of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

The establishment, status and activities of the Croatian Heritage Foundation shall be regulated by the Act on the Croatian Heritage Foundation.

The founder of the Croatian Heritage Foundation shall be the Republic of Croatia.

The Statute of the Croatian Heritage Foundation shall be adopted with the approval of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

III. PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS OF THE CROATIANS OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND STRENGTHENING OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

Preservation of the Croatian language, culture and identity

Article 33

The Republic of Croatia shall enable the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia to attend entry-level semesters in the study of the Croatian language in the Republic of Croatia free of charge, in compliance with the ordinance issued by the state secretary of the Office.

The Office shall enable attendance of the Croatian classes among the Croatian minorities and emigrants/diaspora, start programmes for learning the Croatian language and culture and support programmes for which there is interest.

The Office shall enable the use of e-learning and textbooks from the Republic of Croatia for learning the Croatian language as a second language in the communities of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

The Republic of Croatia shall encourage the establishment of instructorships for the Croatian language and literature at foreign colleges and universities, as well as the establishment of the departments for the Croatian language at universities in foreign countries where Croatians live.

The Republic of Croatia shall ensure financial means for scholarships for pupils and students in their local communities and in the Republic of Croatia, with a view of improving the knowledge and intellectual potentials of Croatian communities in foreign countries, in compliance with the ordinance issued by the state secretary of the Office.

Information and connection

Article 34

The Office shall inform the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia through its websites, appropriate publications and direct communication, and shall ensure distribution of necessary information to the media in the Republic of Croatia and to the media of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

For the purpose of effective conducting of activities and informing the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, the Office shall establish an administrative and communication network among the state bodies, the Croatian Heritage Foundation and other institutions in the Republic of Croatia, including diplomatic missions and consular posts of the Republic of Croatia.

The Croatian Radio and Television, as a public institution, pursuant to its legal obligations, shall elaborate the plan and programme of the operation of the radio and television shows and public broadcasting services for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, and shall adjust the broadcasting schedule and make it accessible.

Informing the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and the promotion of the Republic of Croatia in the world is of public interest, and the Croatian Radio and Television shall produce and broadcast a multimedia programme with multilingual television and radio contents, which shall be regulated by a contract between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Radio and Television.

Article 35

The Republic of Croatia shall encourage economic activities of Croatians in the neighbouring and surrounding countries with a view of preservation, survival and development of their communities.

Admission to Croatian citizenship

Article 36

Pursuant to the Act on Croatian Citizenship, admission to Croatian citizenship for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia shall be speeded up.

Status of the Croatian without Croatian citizenship

Article 37

The status of the Croatian without Croatian citizenship shall be introduced, which may be acquired by the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia without Croatian citizenship, their spouses without Croatian roots, their children (born and adopted) and friends of the Croatian people and the Republic of Croatia who nurture the Croatian identity and promote the Croatian cultural unity.

The acknowledgement of the status the Croatian without Croatian citizenship shall not presume the affiliation to the Croatian nation in the procedure for admission to Croatian citizenship.

Article 38

The application for acquiring the status of the Croatian without Croatian citizenship shall be submitted to the Office through the diplomatic missions and consular posts of the Republic of Croatia.

The office shall decide on the application by a decision. An appeal may be lodged against the decision within 15 days from the day of the delivery of the decision.

The Commission composed of three members appointed by the Government of the Republic of Croatia shall decide on the appeals.

Article 39

Members of the Croatian people, their spouses and children shall, in support of the application, submit evidence on their affiliation to the Croatian people.

Aliens, friends of the Croatian people and of the Republic of Croatia, in support of the application, shall submit appropriate documentation confirming their commitment to nurturing the Croatian identity and promotion of the Croatian cultural unity (recommendations of associations and institutions of Croatian communities, certificates of membership in Croatian organisations, etc.).

Article 40

The status of the Croatian without Croatian citizenship shall cease by acquiring Croatian citizenship, by renunciation or by revocation.

The status of the Croatian without Croatian citizenship shall cease by revocation if a person harms the reputation of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian communities with his/her behaviour.

Article 41

Persons accorded the status of the Croatian without Croatian citizenship pursuant to this Act shall not be considered aliens in acquiring the benefits in the area of schooling and university education, employment, competitions and scholarships, health insurance and other, which shall be regulated by special laws.

The competent ministers shall issue implementing regulations for acquiring the rights referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.

Benefits for the Croatians without Croatian citizenship and without the status

Article 42

Pursuant to the Aliens Act, for the members of the Croatian people without Croatian citizenship and without the status, the Republic of Croatia shall speed up the procedure for obtaining a temporary stay, work and business permits and other benefits pursuant to special laws.

Benefits for stay in the Republic of Croatia

Article 43

The “Croatia Card” shall be introduced, by which the interested institutions and business entities shall enable the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia to access more easily particular services, and have more favourable conditions for tourist visits, organised stay and participation in cultural events.

The state secretary of the Office shall issue an ordinance to specify the areas of benefits and the method for issuing the “Croatian Card”.

The inclusion in the social and political life of the Republic of Croatia

Article 44

The Republic of Croatia shall ensure the inclusion of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia in the social and political life of the Republic of Croatia through their representation in the Croatian Parliament and in the Council of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

Article 45

In implementing its foreign policy, the Republic of Croatia shall take care that its diplomatic missions and consular posts work on the achievement of goals set out by this Act.

The Office shall be connected to and cooperate with diplomatic missions and consular posts of the Republic of Croatia through the ministry competent for foreign affairs, with a view of conducting activities within its scope.

**IV. DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATION WITH THE CROATIANS
OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

Article 46

The Republic of Croatia shall cooperate with all forms of organisation of the Croatians in the world (associations, organisations, institutions, cultural centres, Croatian Catholic missions, and others) and shall provide them support with the aim of preserving the Croatian identity, promoting the Croatian language, culture and tradition, developing cultural, educational, scientific, economic, sports and other cooperation.

Cultural cooperation

Article 47

With the aim of achieving Croatian cultural unity, the Republic of Croatia shall encourage:

- connecting of associations and cultural institutions from the Republic of Croatia with associations and cultural institutions of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, and among themselves,
- exchange of Croatian cultural activities and heritage created in the local communities between the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Croatia,
- establishment of Croatian cultural institutes/centres in the countries where Croatian communities exist.

Educational and scientific cooperation

Article 48

The Republic of Croatia shall connect its educational and scientific institutions and individuals with Croatian associations, institutions and individuals outside the Republic of Croatia, with the aim of mutual cooperation and uniting of Croatian human, professional, scientific and expert potentials at home and abroad.

Scientific and research work on the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia

Article 49

The Republic of Croatia shall encourage systematic study and research of the Croatians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Croatian minorities and the Croatian emigrants/diaspora.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall establish a documentary centre and museum on the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

Sports cooperation

Article 50

The Republic of Croatia shall encourage and assist in the organisation of sports competitions and meetings of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, in the Republic of Croatia and their communities, and their promotion in the media.

The Republic of Croatia shall support young talented and top sportsmen Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia and shall encourage their inclusion in Croatian clubs and national teams.

Article 51

With the aim of monitoring the cooperation with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, the Office shall collect data and keep records of the following:

- schools and universities in which the Croatian language and culture is taught,
- scientists and researchers of Croatian origin,
- experts of Croatian origin in various professions,
- lobbyists for Croatian interests,
- politicians and parliamentary representatives of Croatian origin,
- sports associations, clubs and prominent sport workers and sportsmen of Croatian origin.

Economic cooperation

Article 52

The Republic of Croatia shall encourage connecting Croatian businessmen outside the Republic of Croatia and their associations with businessmen and their associations in the

Republic of Croatia, advance business relations with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, and encourage investments into production and tourism in the Republic of Croatia.

With the aim of acquiring new markets and promoting export of Croatian products and services, the Republic of Croatia shall encourage cooperation with businessmen of Croatian origin in the world.

The Republic of Croatia shall, in cooperation with businessmen of Croatian origin, elaborate and conduct development projects for areas of special state concern, underdeveloped areas and other areas of economic interest.

The Republic of Croatia shall, in cooperation with businessmen from the Republic of Croatia and businessmen of Croatian origin, in the areas referred to in paragraph 3 of this Article, encourage with priority development projects including the programmes for employment of returnees and immigrants.

The financing of the development projects referred to in paragraph 4 of this Article shall be provided by the means of the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (hereinafter: HBOR) and other commercial banks which will be provided guarantees by the Croatian Agency for Small Business (hereinafter: HAMAG) and guarantee funds of the Republic of Croatia.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall, at the proposal of the Office, determine the amount of reserve financial means (quotas) within the HBOR's means and the quotas of guarantees by the HAMAG and guarantee funds of the Republic of Croatia for the implementation of the development projects referred to in paragraph 4 of this Article.

Article 53

As a form of economic cooperation with the Croatians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the neighbouring and other countries, the Republic of Croatia shall encourage transborder and regional cooperation through its own projects and provide assistance in applying for the funds of the European Union.

Article 54

The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall arrange the issue of financing of programmes for micro loans for family farms and crafts, and the establishment of a guarantee fund for securing loans for small and medium-size enterprises of returnees and immigrants to the Republic of Croatia.

Pursuant to the regulations in force, and in cooperation with the competent bodies, associations and business entities of the Croatians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, financing of programmes for micro loans for family farms and crafts, and a guarantee fund for securing loans for small and medium-size enterprises for the development projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina shall be ensured.

The provision of paragraph 2 of this Article shall apply appropriately also to the minority communities in need.

Article 55

In order to monitor the status of economic relations and investment in the Republic of Croatia by the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, in cooperation with the competent bodies of the Republic of Croatia, the Office shall keep the following records:

- on Croatian businessmen in the world and on Croatian businessmen returnees and immigrants (the address book),
- on the investments of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,
- on the investments of the Croatian returnees and immigrants,
- about the cash remittances of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia,
- on the foreign trade balance with the countries where the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia are resident,
- on business entities in the Republic of Croatia, the owners or founders of which are the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, either returnees or external investors.

The competent bodies of the Republic of Croatia shall be obliged to submit data to the Office for the records referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, in conformity with the provisions of the Personal Data Protection Act.

V. ENCOURAGING THE RETURN OF CROATIAN EMIGRANTS AND THEIR OFFSPRING TO THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND SUPPORT TO ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE GROUPS OF CROATIANS OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Article 56

The Republic of Croatia shall enable the return of Croatian emigrants and immigration of their offspring.

Article 57

For the purpose of facilitating the process of integration in the Croatian society, a “welcome office” shall be established within the Office, where returnees and immigrants, as well as all other interested Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, may obtain necessary information and assistance in solving legal and other matters, including assistance of a mentor/counsellor during the first steps of integration in the Croatian society.

The “welcome office” shall provide information on customs exemptions in importing household items and business inventory upon returning and immigrating to the Republic of Croatia, and on tax reliefs for Croatian returnees/immigrants, natural and legal persons, upon their taking up residence and engaging in business in the Republic of Croatia.

The activities referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article shall also be conducted by state administration offices at the county level.

Article 58

The Office shall elaborate a special Welcome and Reception Programme for Croatian emigrants/diaspora who intend to return and immigrate.

Support to especially vulnerable groups

Article 59

The Republic of Croatia shall, through its diplomatic missions and consular posts, monitor the status of vulnerable Croatian communities and individuals in the countries in which they live and protect and assist them, including a possibility of return/immigration to the Republic of Croatia and integration in the Croatian society.

Attracting pupils and students

Article 60

The Republic of Croatia shall ensure the implementation of programmes for learning the Croatian language in the Republic of Croatia, awarding scholarships to pupils and students of Croatian origin who attend schools or study at colleges or universities in the Republic of Croatia and their accommodation in pupil or student hostels.

With a view of facilitating the enrolment procedure, the universities in the Republic of Croatia shall be encouraged to determine enrolment quotas for the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

The rights concerning school fees, board and lodgings of pupils and students Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia shall be equalised with the rights of pupils and students from the Republic of Croatia.

Croatian educational and scientific institutions shall be encouraged to develop and implement projects of pupil and student exchange between the Croatians in the Republic of Croatia and the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

Article 61

For the purpose of becoming better acquainted with the Republic of Croatia, organisation of visits to the Republic of Croatia of young people of Croatian origin shall be encouraged, as well as organisation of the Croatian language summer/winter schools, various cultural and educational programmes, and professional practice and seasonal work of pupils and students.

Attracting scientists

Article 62

The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall, through its competent bodies, develop programmes for financing scientific projects, with a view of attracting scientists of Croatian origin from all over the world.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall, through its competent bodies, establish a permanent programme of “virtual mentorship” between students and scientists from the Republic of Croatia and students, scientists and businessmen of Croatian origin world-wide with a view of transfer of special expertise and experience.

Employment of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia in accordance with the labour market needs

Article 63

The Ministry competent for labour, in cooperation with the Croatian Employment Office, shall conduct projects for employment of the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, in accordance with the needs and possibilities of the Republic of Croatia.

For the purpose of paragraph 1 of this Article, the Croatian Employment Office shall ensure availability of structured records about labour market needs in the Republic of Croatia, and the Office shall, through diplomatic missions and consular posts, make them available to the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia.

Facilitating return of the retired and other persons

Article 64

By concluding international agreements on social security and health insurance, the Republic of Croatia shall create prerequisites to facilitate return of the retired and other persons to the Republic of Croatia.

Article 65

The Office shall gather data and keep records on the Croatian returnees and immigrants.

VI. TRANSITIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 66

The implementation of this Act shall be within the scope of the Central State Office for the Relations with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia, central state administration bodies pursuant to their stipulated scope of activities and the state administration offices in the counties.

Article 67

The state administration bodies having within their competence operations related to the relations with the Croatians outside the Republic of Croatia shall adjust their organisation, operations and the level of activities to the provisions of this Act.

Article 68

The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall appoint a state secretary of the Office within 15 days from the date of entry into force of this Act.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia shall adopt the Regulation on the internal organisation of the Office not later than 30 days from the date of the appointment of the state secretary.

The state secretary of the Office shall issue an ordinance on the internal organisation not later than 15 days from the date of entry into force of the Regulation referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article.

Article 69

The Government of the Republic of Croatia and the state secretary of the Office shall adopt implementing regulations for which they are authorised pursuant to the provisions of this Act, not later than six months from the date of entry into force of this Act.

The Act on the Croatian Heritage Foundation shall be aligned with the provisions of this Act within six months from the date of entry into force of this Act.

Until the date of entry into force of the Act referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article, the Croatian Heritage Foundation shall act pursuant to the Act on the Croatian Heritage Foundation (Official Gazette 59/90).

Article 70

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration shall continue to conduct activities within its remit, which shall be assumed by the Office pursuant to this Act, until entry into force of the Regulation on the internal organisation of the Office referred to in Article 68, paragraph 2 of this Act.

Upon entry into force of the Regulation referred to in Article 68, paragraph 2 of this Act, the Office shall take over from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration equipment, archives and other documentation, operating resources, financial means allocated for salaries and other rights from labour relations, as well as other financial means for the assumed activities pursuant to this Act.

Upon entry into force of the Regulation referred to in Article 68, paragraph 2 of this Act, the Office shall take over civil servants and employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration who are currently conducting the assumed activities pursuant to this Act.

Civil servants and employees who are currently conducting the assumed activities shall continue to work in the Office and shall keep their acquired diplomatic titles and status.

If necessary, civil servants and employees of the Office may be sent to work in diplomatic missions and consular posts, for tasks related to the relations with the Croatians outside the

Republic of Croatia and other tasks in compliance with their competences, which shall be regulated by an agreement between the Office and the ministry competent for foreign affairs.

Civil servants and employees referred to in paragraph 3 of this Article shall continue to work and shall keep their salaries in accordance with the regulations in force until the adoption of a decision on the assignment to a workplace pursuant to the Ordinance on the internal organisation of the Office.

Article 71

This Act shall enter into force on the eighth day after the day of its publication in the Official Gazette.

Class: 019-03/11-01/01

Zagreb, 21 October 2011

THE CROATIAN PARLIAMENT

The President of the Croatian Parliament
Luka Bebić, m. p.