

# POLICY ON COOPERATION WITH DIASPORA

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, migration is an expression of a constant human aspiration for welfare, progress and general prosperity. Major disasters, but also the reasons of economic nature are most often the main motivational factors for which migrations are occurring generally and reasons why such an image of the importance of these occurrences in the world has been created, creating a need to institutionalize this area of human life. It should be said that these are phenomena and processes that are characteristic of all countries, regardless of the degree of economic development.

Migration to developed countries, but also from one developing country to another, as well as within developed countries, brings about a change in the structure of the population both in host countries and in countries of origin, which are traditionally defined as mother countries. In host countries, migration impacts meeting labour market demand, as well as the overall contribution to the dynamics of social developments. On the other hand, in the countries of origin, migration leave consequences of economic, social, cultural and other nature, but simultaneously give a significant contribution to reducing poverty and economic development of the country, primarily by establishing connections, transferring knowledge and other forms of assistance.

Fully aware of the contemporary trends of human civilization, a great number of countries in the world has begun to build and establish relationships with citizens who left their country, thus creating an even stronger foundation for the development of their own societies. Consequently, the cooperation between the countries of origin and their emigrants abroad has become topical in the world. By encouraging and welcoming emigrants to invest in the country of origin, by transferring the acquired knowledge and experience, but also by providing country's support to emigrants abroad, bridges are built that will bring mutual welfare and security in the long run.

In general, it can be said that migration as a historical phenomenon, but also a fact, is a part of political, economic, social and cultural flows equally both in the host countries and in the countries of origin. People involved in migrations have long been engaged in contemporary social flows, known as globalization. There is no doubt that these social events are outside social regulation and norming to a great extent, at least as far as Bosnia and Herzegovina is concerned.

States that have experience in establishing and fostering relations with their emigrants abroad allocate responsibilities for the issue of cooperation in a different way. While some countries have diaspora / emigration ministries, others have agencies or directories or offices. However, regardless of the institutional arrangement in this area, there are common elements of the direction of action of states towards emigrants abroad. Most countries work to strengthen ties with their diaspora, first of all by preserving cultural identity and establishing economic co-operation. The various mechanisms for connecting emigrants and the country of origin are becoming more and more numerous, starting from the improvement of the position and realization of the rights in the host countries by the establishment and development of bilateral relations, to the connection of emigrants to the development of the country of origin by systemic use of human resources and financial and social resources.

Most of neighbouring countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Croatia, Montenegro and Albania, have taken measures to connect their own resources with resources of their diaspora. Irrespective of the adoption of the legal framework for cooperation with diaspora, the focus of efforts of the neighbouring countries varies depending on the needs of the country and the resources their diaspora have. Some countries have placed a stress on the development of a policy for the return of educated persons and the establishment of a network of scientific cooperation. Others have focused on strengthening the economic partnership with emigrants and strengthening the impact of remittances from diaspora on the development of the country, while some countries focused on lobbying emigrants in host countries to improve the image of the countries of origin.

Aware of modern social trends, as well as the fact that it is necessary to establish institutional ties with emigrants, the BiH authorities have decided to frame the reasons of historical, economic, humane and cultural nature into a document that will be a clear signpost, commitment and expression of the will of long-term cooperation without alternative.

The Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora is undoubtedly a clear commitment of BiH to make itself available to diaspora for the first time, to provide diaspora with all the necessary support in exercising its rights in the country. With this document BiH authorities want to acknowledge the potential of diaspora and help in efforts to fully employ and mobilize re-sources available outside of home country. At the same time, our diaspora is expected to take a proactive approach and initiatives and give proposals for connecting in specific projects and programs as well as for the inclusion of relevant institutions from BiH in their preparation and implementation. This would surely contribute to the improvement of bilateral relations and cooperation between institutions of BiH and host countries.

The Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora is intended to recognize, nurture and develop ties between the emigrants of BiH and their own country, to create and informatively recognize the conditions for greater integration of the emigrants into the socio-economic development of BiH, and to encourage diaspora to contribute to the international promotion of the country and the building of a positive image BiH by linking and working on international projects, projects in their country of residence and projects in BiH.

The BiH diaspora is becoming an increasingly important player in the political, economic, educational, sports, cultural and life of countries receiving in general. Such a diaspora situation can significantly influence the decision-making process, the work of state institutions and general social trends in the countries of admission, and hence the content and quality of cooperation between the countries of accession with BiH.

The Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora is a document that clearly reflects a conclusion of the BiH Council of Ministers, adopted at the 22nd meeting held on 8 September 2015. The conclusion is that the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees is in charge of “preparing, in cooperation with other competent institutions at all levels of government, the Draft Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora, which will be a prerequisite for regulating this matter”.

The conclusion is based on the Strategic Framework for Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted at the 19th meeting of the Council of Ministers of BiH, held on 20 August 2015. Objective 12 of the Framework sets forth the obligation to improve the system of human rights protection and the development of BiH's relations with diaspora as one of priorities while Measure 3 envisages developing BiH's policies on diaspora including: developing BiH's policies on diaspora, encouraging, developing and coordinating cooperation with diaspora with the aim of achieving developmental effects and cooperation, strengthening ties with emigrants for their inclusion in social and economic development of BiH, protection and realization of their rights, as well as monitoring of emigration trends.

In accordance with Article 12 of the Law on Ministries and Other Administrative Bodies of BiH (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 5/03, 42/03, 26/04, 42/04, 45/06, 88/07, 35/09, 59/09, 103/09), in cooperation with other institutions at all levels of government, the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, as the competent institution for policy making in BiH in the field of emigration, has drafted a Draft Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora, which is a framework and starting point, i.e. a basic document that will serve for institutionalisation of cooperation with the emigration of BiH diaspora. With the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH having a coordinating role, the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora has an intention to connect the entire BiH diaspora with institutions at all levels of government, which will proactively contribute to the achievement of mutual cooperation and benefits.

At its 65th meeting held on 21 July 2016, the Council of Ministers of BiH adopted a Decision on the Appointment of a Working Group for the Development of the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora, consisting of representatives of institutions at the state, entity and Brčko District levels.

## **2. LEGAL GROUNDS FOR THE POLICY**

In order to understand the legal grounds for the Policy on Cooperation with diaspora, it should be understood that this is the first document of this type that BiH has chosen to develop, which document will serve as the starting point for activities to be taken by the authorities at all levels.

Article I (7) (e) of the BiH Constitution determines that any citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina enjoys the protection of Bosnia and Herzegovina abroad. In the sense of this provision of the BiH Constitution, it is clear that BiH has realistic grounds for the drafting of documents such as the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora, which will institutionalize relations with its citizens abroad and thus contribute to better cooperation and protection of its citizens.

Further, Article 12 of the Law on Ministries and Other Administrative Bodies (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 5/03, 42/03, 26/04, 42/04, 45/06, 88/07, 35/09, 59/09, 103/09) prescribes competences and powers of the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, which is in charge of "creating a policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina concerning emigrants". Article 4 of the Law

prescribes that the ministries prepare laws, other regulations and delegated legislation within their scope of competence and perform other tasks determined by special laws and other regulations. In the context of the aforementioned provisions, with the aim of implementing the Law on Ministries and Other Administrative Bodies, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH put together the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora with the help and cooperation with other administrative bodies and institutions at all levels.

The legal grounds for the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora are also found in Article 8 of the Law on Ministries and Other Administrative Bodies, according to which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH is in charge of encouraging, developing and coordinating the cooperation with the emigrants from BiH, as well as in Article 10 (1)(3) of the Law on Administration, according to which the administrative bodies enact regulations for the implementation of laws and other regulations. As the diaspora policy is within competence of the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and encouraging, developing and coordinating cooperation with emigration is within competence of the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is clear that the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora will create opportunities for various ministries and institutions to exercise their competence.

In addition to the aforementioned legal grounds, Article 11(1) of the Law on Administration should also be taken into account as other legal grounds for the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora. The Law provides that, while exercising their competence, the authorities carry out a development policy that includes development strategies and the promotion of economic, social security, cultural, sports, ecological and overall social development. As the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora precisely creates conditions concerning the exercise of rights from different areas of human life, with the help of various measures, it is its contribution to overall social development that is to be highlighted.

Furthermore, one must underline the fact that at the 22nd meeting held on 8 September 2015, the BiH Council of Ministers tasked the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees to prepare a draft Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora in cooperation with other competent institutions at all levels of government. The Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora is implementation of the conclusion of the BiH Council of Ministers in the sense of the Law on Administration.

Further, the grounds for Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora also include the BiH Presidency's document entitled: "General Directions and Priorities for the Implementation of the Foreign Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina", No. 01-645-30 / 03, dated 26 March 2003. Point III. (c) of this document of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina reads "the protection of the interests of Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens abroad" as one of priority activities.

### **3. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

Looking at the institutional framework contributes to understanding the field of emigration in general. Namely, institutions that have matters related to cooperation with emigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina within their competence could be divided into those that have an obliga-



tion to comply with the obligation to cooperate with emigrants and those that do not have these matters directly within their competence but work in the field of emigration because of their role and competence they have.

Therefore, the institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina that have the obligation to establish contact and cooperation with the emigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina among their activities/competencies are:

- within its competence to implement foreign policy, the BiH Presidency initiates the conclusion of bilateral agreements in the field of consular, labour and property protection of BiH citizens abroad;
- the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees has direct communication, i.e. clear directions for action as set forth in BiH's diaspora policy, within its competences,
- the Department for Diaspora operates through two sectors: the Sector for Status and Information and the Sector for Economic, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation;
- the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in charge of encouraging, developing and coordinating cooperation with emigrants from BiH and, with a network of diplomatic and consular missions, this Ministry is the institution nearest to the diaspora;
- the BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs is in charge of supplementary teaching in diaspora;
- the competent institutions of the Federation of BiH, the Republika Srpska, the Brčko District of BiH, cantons and municipalities - given the competences and the matter of emigration is multisectoral, many issues are solved at the entity, cantonal and municipal levels of government, so the participation of various actors from different sectors and levels of government are needed in defining a diaspora policy.

Having in mind its content and the activities envisaged, in addition to the listed institutions, other competent authorities and civil society organizations will inevitably be involved in the implementation of the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora. Therefore, given the achievements wanted, the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora requires the involvement of a larger number of actors both in BiH and abroad.

## 4. A SITUATION ASSESSMENT

According to statistics, the number of persons living abroad born in BiH, regardless of their current citizenship, in 50 countries is 1,671,177, of which 57% or 955,780 persons live in EU countries. This number does not include descendants born in the host countries. In this regard, the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees does not have data on the number of descendants (second and third generation) of emigrants, but estimates that the total number of persons originating in BiH living abroad could be around 2 million including persons born in BiH (1,671,177) and their descendants. It is estimated that the number of emigrants with descendants exceeds two million. The largest number of emigrants from BiH live in European countries - more than 950,000, of which 410,000 in Croatia, 335,000 in Serbia, 160,000 in Germany, 150,000 in Austria, 97,000 in Slovenia, 57,000 in Switzerland, 56,000 in Sweden, while 130,000 persons born in BiH live in the United States, 40,000 in Canada and 40,000 in Australia.

The status of emigrants in the host countries is resolved, largely through the acquisition of citizenship, permanent or temporary residence permits, and work and student visas. According to data available to the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees in BiH, about 500,000 emigrants from BiH acquired citizenship of the host country (excluding Serbia and Croatia). According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, in the period from 1998 to December 2015, 69,289 people gave up their citizenship in order to acquire the citizenship of another state. This confirms that, in a large number of cases, citizens of BiH succeed in retaining citizenship of BiH when they receive the citizenship of the host country.

Considering that in practice, emigrants are often called refugees abroad, it is very important to emphasize that among the emigrants there is a small number of those with refugee status. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data from June 2015, there are 19,628 persons from BiH with refugee status in the world, most of them in Serbia (over 15,000).

Emigrants from BiH are among better integrated immigrant groups in host countries, which is confirmed by the data of the competent institutions of host countries on high employment rates, a high percentage of participation in the education system and in recent years more noticeable inclusion in political life in host countries.

Although a number of associations dealing with cultural, sports, educational, informative, humanitarian, religious and other activities operate among diaspora, they are not well organized. The vast majority of emigrants are not members of the associations. There are indications that only 1% of the emigrants from BiH are involved in the associations and that the role and importance of associations for emigrant communities from BiH in the EU and the countries of the former Yugoslavia are extremely limited. Generally speaking, this trend is not unusual for other diaspora and other countries, for example, in Sweden, where emigrants from different countries are particularly well organized because of the help they receive from local authorities, only 20% of them are members of immigrant organizations. Only 11% of immigrants from BiH and other countries of the former Yugoslavia are involved in the work of organizations in Sweden.

It is characteristic that members of the emigrant associations from BiH are mainly from one ethnic group. The World Federation of Diaspora of BiH (SSDBiH), an organization that brings together emigrants from 15 countries, operates among diaspora. However, it is an organization that gathers mostly Bosniaks, and in terms of representativeness, it is not the umbrella organization of the entire diaspora from BiH. Local clubs such as the Majeвица Association in Switzerland, the Banja Luka Association in Sweden, the Jajce Regional Club in Croatia, the Usora Region Regional Club in Croatia, the Kozara Association in Serbia, the Ključ Friendship in Switzerland, the Ring Association in Croatia etc. could be the most representative and most interested in cooperation, especially with local communities in BiH. Further, in diaspora, there are vocational associations, for example, associations of teachers of mother tongues, associations of academic workers, artists, entrepreneurs and several women's organizations. It should be emphasized that religious communities from BiH gather a large number of emigrants abroad.

Institutions in BiH do not provide sufficient support to emigrant associations.

Institutions in BiH pay very little attention and support to learning the mother tongue and preserving culture among emigrants, which is one of the reasons for the accelerated assimilation of emigrant children. Today, in many countries of the world, young people originating from BiH earned university degrees in languages of host countries, but their language competence in their mother tongue is very limited. At present, a very small percentage of children are included in supplementary classes that are mostly held by emigrant organizations with certain support from BiH.

Diaspora makes great human, economic and social potential for the development of BiH. Emigrant human resources include the education, expertise and qualifications, while economic resources include the transfer of remittances from emigrants, savings, direct investment and trade. Social resources include new social, cultural and political values that can help the social and economic development of the country of origin and serve as a bridge of cooperation internationally.

The diaspora is a relatively young and educated group of people made up of highly educated individuals and individuals who have acquired professional knowledge and experience in their new environment, which could greatly assist BiH in its development and its path towards the European Union. In addition to numerous experts and recognized cultural workers, hundreds of doctors of science, university professors and scientific workers originating from BiH live and work in European countries and the United States.

In addition to human resources, diaspora has also great economic potential, which is confirmed by the stable inflow of remittances of two and three billion BAM per year, which makes up about 10-15% of BiH's gross domestic product. Further, savings of diaspora, although largely deposited in the host countries, is a huge financial resource and is several times higher than the amount of remittances. This amount is estimated at several billion euros a year.

Despite the difficulties and obstacles associated with investing in BiH, there are many successful examples of investment by emigrants, which is the majority investment in some areas (Sanski Most, Velika Kladuša, Prijedor, Višegrad etc.).

The largest number of emigrants maintains strong ties with BiH, especially with places of origin, which is evident both in the desire and interest to contribute to economic and social development in BiH.

Incomplete legal framework, better organization and planned approach and coordination of activities at various levels related to emigration is the biggest obstacle to more efficient work in the field of diaspora.

The BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees has included the matter of diaspora into 2012-2015 and 2016-2020 Migration and Asylum Strategies of BiH. The Ministry of Security of BiH, where the measures are proposed for strengthening the institutional capacities in BiH with the aim of connecting diaspora and development, i.e. linking the emigrants with the development of BiH. Thanks to the measures envisaged, the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees has been able to launch a series of activities in the field of diaspora integration in the

development of BiH that have been focused mainly on the support to local self-government units in the inclusion of emigrants in local development. Further, activities and researches on improving knowledge about emigration and migration were also carried out, and with the Swiss support, a joint platform of the organizations of emigrants in Switzerland, entitled “e-diaspora”, was established.

In addition to the incomplete legal framework, the problem of a multisectoral approach was identified as a problem by the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees in BiH, in its work with emigrants. Enhancing cooperation with emigration in different areas and the integration of emigrants into the development of BiH requires the inclusion of other institutions at all levels of government, starting with local communities, cantons, entities, state institutions, each in the area of their competence and fields of action, given many issues concerning emigration are being addressed at different levels of government.

Further, currently there is no cooperation between different institutions or a coordinated approach to diaspora. Due to the necessity of involving different sectors and institutions in the work with diaspora, appropriate coordination and cooperation mechanisms within BiH have to be developed.

In addition, currently there is no regulated mechanism for regular consultation with diaspora in the decision-making process that will need to be established, since emigrants are the main target group in this policy-making process.

In addition to the aforementioned shortcomings, communication channels with diaspora are not sufficiently developed, their access to information is limited and are insufficiently represented in the media in BiH.

Further, it should be noted that the civil sector in BiH does not have sufficiently developed activities concerning diaspora and there is a need for its strengthening in this area.

## **5. VISION**

BiH emigration makes an inseparable segment of the Bosnia and Herzegovina society and strong links with emigration are the strategic interest of BiH.

Creating the legal basis and conditions for establishing, strengthening and preserving the relationship between BiH and its diaspora, in particular preserving mother tongues, culture and identity of its people abroad, and creating the conditions for participation and contribution of emigrants in social and economic development of BiH.

Therefore, the vision of the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora is the establishment of long-term institutional co-operation with BiH diaspora and the maximum increase of its influence on BiH’s development. At the same time, the vision is to point to the clear commitment of the BiH

institutions to assist emigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina in establishing comprehensive ties with their country.

## **6. PRINCIPLES**

The Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora emphasizes the key principles that will guide all institutions in BiH when undertaking activities and creating preconditions for cooperation with emigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

They are the following principles:

- The principle of institutional co-operation means that institutions at all levels, according to the statutory powers, and emigrants' associations establish a range of mutually related measures and activities envisaged by the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora, the ultimate goal of which is mutual benefit and improvement of the image of both diaspora of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the state of BiH;
- The principle of diaspora inclusion means inclusion of emigrants in the planning, organization, implementation and monitoring of various programs that are of interest for diaspora, as well as the encouragement of emigrants to contribute to the establishment of co-operation between institutions of the host country and BiH institutions and the strengthening of the positive image of BiH. This is a prerequisite for the success of emigration policy. This principle enables the establishment of two-way communication, recognizes diaspora as a resource that can help BiH, and contributes to the more active participation of emigrants in socio-economic life in BiH;
- The principle of reciprocity means that the measures and activities under the Policy on Co-operation with Diaspora will be implemented in accordance with mutual cooperation and in the spirit of good relations. The relationship between the state and its administrative units and diaspora should be transparent, built on trust, respect and reciprocity. Diaspora constitutes both an obligation and a huge potential resource. BiH is obliged to take care of the position and rights of its emigrants abroad and in BiH and to improve various forms of cooperation with the emigrant communities. Give and take is a concept that will create a partnership between BiH and emigration;
- The principle of multidisciplinary approach means the involvement of institutions of different levels of government with respect for competences / cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary approaches. The involvement of institutions from different levels of government and cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary approaches to emigration are of crucial importance. Measures and activities undertaken in the area of emigration must be inter-sectorally based. The document needs to mobilize actors at all levels of government to improve co-operation with emigrants.

## **7. OBJECTIVES**

The Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora should create the necessary prerequisites for systematic and quality improvement of cooperation with emigrants for which it is necessary to include institutions from all levels of government in BiH, each within their competencies, to

respond to the needs and requests of emigration, and to include emigration in economic and social life and development of BiH. The above assumptions will be created through three main strategic objectives:

1. Development of the legal system and institutional capacities,
2. Providing support to diaspora and improvement of cooperation,
3. Creating conditions for a greater contribution of diaspora to the development of BiH.

## **OBJECTIVE 1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES**

The development of the legal system and institutional capacities ensures, above all, the basis for a more active role of institutions at different levels of government in terms of preparation and adoption of normative and strategic documents in which co-operation will be part of BiH's legal order. Activities for the implementation of this objective do not mean the automatic establishment of new institutions, bodies or an increase in the number of employees, but can only mean a different organization of existing capacities and the introduction of additional or different tasks that various institutions should perform, in the nature of things, i.e. in accordance with their competencies, available capacities and needs. The development of the legal framework implies the development of a strategy to systematically address the issue of relations and cooperation with diaspora, ensure that the capacities of institutions at various levels effectively co-operate with diaspora, establish inter-institutional coordination within BiH, as well as models of effective co-operation with diaspora.

With the aim of developing the legal system and institutional capacities, the authorities in BiH will:

### **1.1. Develop a framework strategy for cooperation with emigrants**

The Strategy for Cooperation with Diaspora, as a framework document, will be an important step in the process of establishing and regulating the relationship between BiH and diaspora. The Strategy will regulate relations and establish legal bases for planning and regulating BiH's cooperation with diaspora and further elaborate on co-operation in areas that engage key development segments of the society and define priorities in that regard. The Strategy will envisage the preparation of the required legal framework, which will include a supporting action plan, which will identify actors and activities, timelines and financial resources needed for implementation. The development of the Strategy, involving the involvement of all levels of government and institutions, should create the necessary prerequisites for systematic and quality improvement of cooperation with emigrants in the mid-term.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH



Competent institutions dealing with the issue of emigration in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and competent institutions from Republika Srpska and Brcko District are obliged to participate in drafting the document, in accordance with their constitutional competences.

## **1.2. Develop mechanisms of interinstitutional coordination for cooperation with diaspora**

Given the complex constitutional structure of BiH, as well as shared competencies at different levels of government, one of the key issues is the issue of coordination of BiH institutions in the work with diaspora. Namely, by establishing and enhancing the cooperation of institutions at all levels of government in BiH, an inter-agency body of consultative character will be formed at the level of the Council of Ministers of BiH, which will bring together the most important institutions at the level of BiH, Entities and Brcko District BiH and establish cooperation with other levels of government in BiH (cantons, units of local self-government), which influence diaspora with their policies. The advisory inter-departmental body may include emigrant representatives who can contribute to the socio-economic development of BiH, as well as the civil sector of BiH.

This inter-departmental body, appointed by the BiH Council of Ministers, will have the task of establishing an effective system of co-ordination and exchange of information between institutions addressing the status issues of emigrants, promotion of investment, cooperation in the economy, science, education and culture and, with its advisory role in the form of giving recommendations, it will contribute to quality co-operation. This advisory body will have the opportunity to initiate and actively participate in the development and monitoring of strategic, planning and action documents in the area of cooperation with diaspora, i.e. the opportunity to initiate projects that are useful for cooperation with emigrants. This body will report annually to the Council of Ministers of BiH. The BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees will provide technical and professional assistance to this body.

Responsible authority: the Council of Ministers of BiH, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH, competent Entity Institutions

## **1.3. Strengthen the capacity of institutions in BiH to cooperate with diaspora**

It is necessary to strengthen the capacity of institutions at different levels of government in BiH to intensify cooperation with emigrants. It is important to first conduct a series of thematic training for civil servants from different sectors of the economic and social sector, thus initiating the process of building a knowledge base within the public sector on the concept of “diaspora and development”, i.e. inclusion of diaspora into BiH development and cooperation with diaspora.

The next activities are to identify responsible persons in relevant institutions for work on issues related to diaspora, i.e. to include this matter in strategic documents in different sectors and levels of government.

A training plan will be developed, expert support will be provided and memoranda of cooperation with institutions dealing with emigration will be signed to define activities to identify responsible persons in relevant institutions (from existing staffing capacities of the institutions) and to include emigration issues into strategic documents.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH

In carrying out this activity, institutions from all levels of government are actively involved in accordance with their competences, with the support of the civil sector, especially emigrant organizations as well as international organizations.

#### **1.4. Strengthen the capacities of local self-government units for co-operation with emigrants**

In practice, cooperation with emigrants has shown that it is particularly important, efficient and visible when it is taking place at a local level. This is actually the level of government that effectively and directly achieves co-operation that results in mutual benefit. Therefore, the strengthening of the capacities of local self-government units for cooperation with diaspora is essential. This support implies mobilizing local communities to identify and better connect with their diaspora, organizing trainings in the work of diaspora, establishing a co-ordinator / emigration office (as mentioned in point 1.3), incorporating emigration issues into local development plans, improving services provided to emigrants (web registrars - introducing the possibility of obtaining certain documents on-line, responding quickly to emigrants' inquiries, investment information, exercise of certain rights etc.), collecting information about diaspora, emigrants and returnees at the local level etc.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH, competent authorities of the Federation of BiH, Republika Srpska, Brčko District and local community.

#### **1.5. Track emigration flows and report on them**

In the segment of monitoring emigration flows and collecting data on emigration, it is necessary to upgrade existing and develop new statistics. This implies the upgrading of existing registers / emigration databases, the development of quantitative statistics on emigration, the development of new statistics on qualitative indicators on the ability and willingness of emigrants to participate in the socio - economic development of BiH, support for academic research in order to better get acquainted with diaspora and their needs, the development of academic programs that study the phenomenon of emigration in an interdisciplinary way, the establishment of a system for collecting data on emigration and returnees from diaspora at the local level,

The BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees will sign a Memorandum of Cooperation with the BiH Agency for Statistics and other competent institutions.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH



Involved institutions: The BiH Agency for Statistics and other competent institutions from all levels of government in accordance with their competencies, with the support of the civil sector, in particular emigrant organizations as well as international organizations.

## **OBJECTIVE 2. PROVIDING SUPPORT TO DIASPORA AND IMPROVEMENT OF COOPERATION**

Providing support to BiH emigrants in exercising their rights and interests - in BiH and abroad - is of primary importance for the relevant institutions in BiH. Apart from monitoring the passage and amending of regulations in BiH and host countries that deal with the issue of emigrants, it is also necessary to work on creating conditions conducive to and facilitating for the return. BiH takes care of the preservation of national identity of emigrants, cooperates with all forms of emigrant organization and provides support to emigrant organizations and individuals for the purpose of promoting mother tongue learning, advancing educational, scientific, economic and other co-operation.

In order to provide support to diaspora and improvement of cooperation, the authorities in BiH will realize the following:

### **2.1. Monitor the exercise of the rights and interests of emigrants in BiH and host countries**

Bosnia and Herzegovina's priority commitments in this segment relate to the continuous monitoring of the rights, interests and needs of emigrants and returnees from abroad to BiH and the monitoring of their interests and needs in the host countries. The activities to carry out to achieve this will be implemented by the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH and they are in particular: informing the emigrants about their rights in BiH and monitoring their exercise, direct support in answering emigrants' inquiries, production of guides/ information brochures on the exercise of rights (citizenship, recognition of diplomas etc.) for diaspora. The Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH and the Employment and Labour Agency will participate in monitoring the exercise of the rights of emigrant workers who are employed in the receiving countries on the basis of international agreements signed and reported by BiH.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH and the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH.

In carrying out this activity, institutions from all levels of government are actively involved in accordance with their competencies, with the support of the civil sector, in particular emigrant organizations as well as international organizations.

### **2.2. Strengthen the capacities of emigrant organizations and establish a mechanism for presenting emigrants in the receiving countries and in BiH**

Efficient cooperation with diaspora requires support in capacity building of existing organizations and further organization of diaspora. Support should be directed, in particular, to young professionals and highly educated staff, to their interconnection and to their connection with BiH as well as their business association.

It is also necessary to examine and develop a mechanism for the representation of diaspora in BiH - representative bodies of diaspora (representatives of different organizations and prominent individuals from diaspora) so that in each country with numerous emigrants, if possible and if there is interest, a body with equal participation of representatives of all three constituent peoples, including representatives of national minorities, can be established.

The establishment of representative bodies will in no way affect the existing mode of organization of diaspora, but it will only facilitate the communication of diaspora with institutions in BiH, and could also contribute to better co-operation with institutions in host countries.

These activities will be conducted by organizing meetings with emigrant associations with the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH - diplomatic and consular representation offices of BiH. Members of the representative bodies will also receive additional training on representation and project preparation as well as communication for more effective cooperation with BiH.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH

Involved actors: emigrants' organizations and individuals from diaspora.

### **2.3. Preserve mother tongue, culture and identity**

In this segment, it is necessary to support the establishment of a system for the organization of supplementary classes for children in diaspora, and to promote the importance of mother tongue learning abroad as well as the preservation of cultural heritage and identity. In addition to the systematic regulation of supplementary education teaching, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH, the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, entity and other competent institutions in the field of education at different levels of government, the mother tongue using the advantages and benefits of online learning, summer schools of mother tongue and culture education in BiH, where participants would be children and young people from diaspora, to get acquainted with culture, history and natural resources of BiH through socializing.

In this regard, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BH will establish and maintain a register of supplementary schools for children from BiH, born abroad, and of real needs for supplementary education in diaspora.

Further, in cooperation with relevant institutions, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH and the BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees will initiate activities to establish an interactive

portal (online). The Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH will sign memoranda of cooperation with competent institutions in the field of education at different levels of government with a view to organizing summer school of mother tongues for children from diaspora.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and other competent institutions at different levels of government.

#### **2.4. Improve cooperation in the field of economy, education, science, culture and sport**

Bosnia and Herzegovina will encourage the linking of emigrant businessmen with BiH businesses by identifying and establishing regular contacts with emigrant businessmen, organizing economic emigrants' forums, business / investment conferences, presentations for emigrant investors, meetings with emigrants and BiH, fostering emigrant investing and manufacturing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, advocating the introduction of certain facilitations and incentive measures, supporting mentoring programs for emigrants to open small and medium enterprises in BiH, supporting the promotion of BiH's tourism potential through diaspora, promotion of domestic products, mutual trade, drafting of investment project lists and make them accessible to emigrants and thus create the prerequisites for diaspora to invest their capital to support the country's economic development.

It is necessary to improve existing co-operation with diaspora in the field of education, science, culture and sports with new contents, to encourage the linking of educational, scientific and cultural institutions and individuals from BiH to emigrants and their organizations, to encourage exchange of pupils, students and professors, promote education of emigrant students at higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, initiate the inclusion of scientists and experts originating from BiH into scientific research projects in BiH, initiate programs of virtual return of experts, their mobility and networking, exchange cultural creativity of BiH and diaspora, promote the cultural creativity of diaspora in BiH etc. At the same time, diaspora is expected to include institutions of BiH in the activities carried out in host countries and link them with institutions of host countries, whenever possible, especially when it comes to economic, scientific, cultural, educational, cooperation and youth exchange projects.

Further, in the field of science and culture, it is necessary to create lists of cultural and scientific projects in BiH, make them accessible to emigrants, to encourage them to help their contacts in finding investors and partners for their implementation.

In cooperation with the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina will map diaspora in countries with a large number of BiH emigrants with the aim of obtaining information on the number and profile of emigrants in the host countries, with a particular emphasis on economic and academic potentials of emigrants.

The BiH Foreign Investment Promotion Agency will make updated lists of investment projects and make them accessible to emigrants in cooperation with local government units, while updated lists of cultural and scientific projects will be made by the BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH, in cooperation with the Foreign Investment Promotion Agency and Entity appropriate institutions.

In carrying out this activity, institutions from all levels of government are actively involved in accordance with their competences, with the support given by the civil sector, especially the organization of emigrants as well as international organizations.

## **2.5. Enhance information, information exchange and communication**

In this segment, it is necessary to draw up a communication plan with emigrants with targeted and clearly defined activities, which should be the role of the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina whose staff capacities need to be strengthened in diplomatic and consular missions in order to map diaspora, respectable individuals and exchanging information with emigrants.

Diaspora media as well as special programs in BiH for diaspora should be supported, and a special portal for diaspora where access to various information regarding diaspora (return, business start-up, interconnection etc.) should be supported, ensuring the presence of institutions on social networks that will give the opportunity for public interaction, greater media attention in accordance with the needs and potentials of diaspora, prepare regular newsletters to be delivered to emigrants via e-mail, provide information on events in the local community, promote the potentials of diaspora, positive examples of return, investment etc.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH

In carrying out this activity, institutions from all levels of government are actively involved in accordance with their competences, with the support given by the civil sector, especially the organization of emigrants as well as international organizations.

## **2.6. Support the civilian sector activities of diaspora and BiH, which contribute to the strengthening of BiH and diaspora ties**

It is necessary to support diaspora-related activities of civil society organizations with the aim of preserving mother tongues, culture and identity, as well as activities promoting the cooperation of emigrants and BiH in economy, science, culture, education and sports, building the capacities of organizations and associations of emigrants in contributing to the presentation and work of prominent representatives of emigrants in BiH, representing BiH's economic potentials abroad and establishing and supporting the networks of emigrant business people, supporting the promotion of media capacities of emigrant civil society organizations (radio, printing, online presentations) and the like.

At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen capacities and establish more efficient cooperation with civil society organizations in BiH for their greater engagement in cooperation with diaspora. Currently, this segment of cooperation is underdeveloped, and in this sense it is necessary to support cooperation and partnership between domestic civil society organizations and organizations in diaspora.

In this regard, it is necessary to organize civil forums - meetings of organizations from diaspora and BiH, support the civil sector in joint projects with diaspora, encourage the civil sector to include diaspora as a target group in their activities etc.

The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH will organize civil sector fora - meetings of organizations from diaspora and civil society organizations from BiH.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH

In carrying out this activity, institutions from all levels of government are actively involved in accordance with their competences, with the support given by the civil sector, especially the organization of emigrants as well as international organizations.

### **OBJECTIVE 3. CREATING CONDITIONS FOR A GREATER CONTRIBUTION OF DIASPORA TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIH**

Nearly 1.7 million persons born in BiH live in diaspora, sending annual remittances worth between 2 billion and 3 billion BAM, which makes up to 15% of BiH's GDP. Many emigrants have achieved enviable results educationally and professionally in the host countries, but are also ready to help BiH develop. Bearing in mind these significant financial resources available to the emigrants, it is necessary to take measures for their more comprehensive inclusion in the development of BiH, to create more favourable conditions for investing in BiH and sharing their knowledge with the country of origin. The implementation of measures aimed at creating conditions for a greater contribution of emigrants to the development of BiH implies activities attracting investment, financial, human and other capital, and their promotion for the purpose of development of BiH.

In order to create the conditions for greater contribution of emigrants in the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the authorities in BiH will carry out the following:

#### **3.1. Promote diaspora and development of resources of diaspora**

In BiH there is insufficient knowledge about diaspora, its number and large resources that can strongly encourage BiH's development. In order to change this, it is necessary to launch activities to promote diaspora, successful individuals, inspirational stories, promote good examples of investment by emigrants, and, in general, business development etc.

In order to promote the development of resources of diaspora, on the basis of the information provided by mapping the diaspora, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH will prepare and print publications containing successful stories, highlights examples of good practice, make an address book of successful emigrants in various fields, which will be available on the web page of the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees.

Further, the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees will prepare an information campaign with the aim of promoting diaspora and development of resources of diaspora. Through its website, in cooperation and with the approval of prominent individuals, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH will make available the document relating to the mapping of diaspora.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH

In carrying out this activity, institutions from all levels of government are actively involved in accordance with their competences, with the support given by the civil sector, especially the organization of emigrants as well as international organizations.

### **3.2. Mobilize investment and financial resources of diaspora**

It is necessary to facilitate or eliminate obstacles to the inflow of remittances (especially through formal financial flows), to facilitate and stimulate investment from diaspora, encourage emigrants' savings, organize investment conferences, familiarize diaspora with investment opportunities in BiH, support the establishment of small and medium enterprises with co-financing from diaspora, remove administrative barriers, establish new banking products for emigrants and mechanisms for co-financing development projects (e.g. by local communities, diaspora, higher levels of government), launch private-public partnerships with emigrants in different areas.

It is necessary to develop a development document envisaging the establishment of programs for investment and savings of diaspora, as well as removal of administrative barriers.

Responsible authorities: the BiH Economic Planning Directorate, the Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Agency for Promotion of Foreign Investments, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and Entity appropriate authorities

In carrying out this activity, institutions from all levels of government are actively involved in accordance with their competences, with the support given by the civil sector, especially the organization of emigrants as well as international organizations.

### **3.3. Mobilize human potentials, knowledge and skills of emigrants**

A large number of experts of diaspora (especially in the field of medicine and information technologies, as well as lecturers at universities) - their knowledge and social assets - make a



significant development potential for BiH. The proposed activities in this segment relate to the involvement of experts and emigrants in the preparation of study programs, as guest lecturers (especially in the field of health care), programs of transferring knowledge through mentoring, occasional visits, online consultations, summer schools, seminars and congresses (in particular in the field of health care), the involvement of scientists from diaspora into the work of bodies responsible for various segments of science, finding opportunities for scientists from diaspora to involve researchers and institutions from BiH in their projects, supporting joint projects of domestic and emigrant scientists within which scientific results will be achieved and international contacts will be made necessary for more successful attraction of European funds, support for programs of transferring professional knowledge and training with the involvement of experts from diaspora, transfer of new technologies aimed at strengthening economic development etc.

Based on the report to be drawn up by mapping (2.4 above), in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH will establish a mechanism for the transfer of knowledge from the emigrants in BiH, that is, a mechanism that will connect diaspora businessmen and experts in different areas with institutions, organizations and individuals in BiH. This knowledge transfer mechanism implies that the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees will enter into agreements on cooperation with institutions and individuals in BiH, on the one hand, and the eminent emigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, to achieve its co-ordinating role in the process of cooperation.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH

In carrying out this activity, institutions from all levels of government are actively involved in accordance with their competences, with the support given by the civil sector, especially the organization of emigrants as well as international organizations.

### **3.4. Support philanthropic activities and humanitarian relief actions taken by diaspora**

Diaspora also contributes to philanthropic activities and humanitarian aid campaigns (financial and in-kind assistance) directed towards local communities, organizations and individuals in BiH. This type of activity will be encouraged by an initiative to improve the procedures for exemption from customs duties and taxes for philanthropic and humanitarian activities of diaspora, as well as to better inform the emigrants of the exemption. Further, activities will be initiated to mobilize diaspora for targeted assistance at the level of local communities and coordinate such assistance.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights and institutions at all levels of government

In carrying out this activity, institutions from all levels of government are actively involved in accordance with their competences, with the support given by the civil sector, especially the organization of emigrants as well as international organizations.

### **3.5. Establish prizes or rewards for diaspora**

Countries with a large number of emigrants have created prizes or rewards for various contributions by emigrants. It is proposed to consider the establishment of similar rewards in BiH - to recognize the emigrants as important factors for the development of BiH. Recognitions could be awarded to individuals and organizations for outstanding engagement in a particular field, merit / contributions to the development and promotion of BiH, science development, language learning, knowledge transfer or generally the development of particular economic cooperation between emigrants and BiH, which will be regulated by a special regulation.

Responsible authority: the Ministry of Human Rights.

## **8. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY ON COOPERATION WITH DI-ASPORA**

The Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora is an indicative and basic document on the basis of which the strategy, programs, plans and other acts will be adopted, in accordance with the constitutional and legal competencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees will initiate the implementation of the activities as soon as possible.

The Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH is in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora.

The BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees will inform the Council of Ministers of BiH once a year about the activities on the implementation of the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora.

## **9. FINANCIAL RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY ON COOPERATION WITH DIASPORA**

It is not necessary to provide additional financial resources for the implementation of the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora.



