

THE CROATIAN PARLIAMENT

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

DECISION

PROMULGATING THE CROATIAN LANGUAGE ACT

I hereby promulgate the Croatian Language Act, passed by the Croatian Parliament at its session on 26 January 2024.

Class: 011-02/24-02/01

Reg. No: 71-10-01/1-24-2

Zagreb, 1 February 2024

The President of
the Republic of Croatia
Zoran Milanović, m. p.

THE CROATIAN LANGUAGE ACT

PART ONE

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Introductory provisions

Article 1

(1) The Croatian language is the official language in the Republic of Croatia and one of the official languages of the European Union.

(2) In its entirety and integrity, the Croatian language is a fundamental component of Croatian identity and Croatian culture, and it is the language used in Croatia in both oral and written communication in public life.

Scope and uniqueness of the Croatian language

Article 2

(1) The Croatian language encompasses the standard Croatian language (traditionally also referred to as either literary Croatian language or Croatian language) in all its functional styles, the language of the entire literary heritage in the Croatian language – in Glagolitic script, Croatian Cyrillic script (bosančica), and Latin script (gajica).

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(2) The uniqueness of the Croatian language lays in its tripartite division into three equal dialect groups: Chakavian (čakavski), Kajkavian (kajkavski) and Shtokavian (štokavski), among which Shtokavian has been selected as the basis for the standard language.

(3) Besides the dialect groups referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article, summarised by the čakaj-što formula, the Croatian language also encompasses their idioms as well as the idioms used by a number of Croats living abroad, such as the idioms of Bunjevci and those spoken in Boka, Molise, Burgenland and Caraşova.

Use of the standard Croatian language in international contacts

Article 3

(1) In contacts with the institutions of the European Union and in international contacts, Croatia is represented using the standard Croatian language and the Latin script (gajica). In justified circumstances, foreign languages can also be used.

(2) Croatian citizens have the right to submit petitions to the European Parliament and complaints to the European Ombudsman in standard Croatian, and also to address the institutions and advisory bodies of the European Union and receive responses in standard Croatian.

Subject-matter of regulation

Article 4

This Act regulates the basic rules regarding the official and public use of the Croatian language, and ensures systematic and expert cultivation of the Croatian language.

Gender meaning of terms

Article 5

The terms used in this Act that have a specific gender meaning equally refer to both masculine and feminine genders.

Scope of the Act

Article 6

(1) This Act promotes the usage of all the idioms of the Croatian language, all the functional styles of the standard Croatian language and all the historic Croatian scripts in appropriate occasions, seeing as they represent significant elements of the intangible cultural heritage and legacy of the Croatian people, especially important for its preservation, nurturing and future development.

(2) This Act does not limit the freedom of literary and artistic expression nor does it regulate private communication.

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(3) This Act does not limit the application of the constitutional act regulating the rights of national minorities, the act regulating the use of language and script of national minorities in Croatia, nor the act regulating the areas of counties, cities and municipalities in Croatia.

(4) This Act does not limit the use of Croatian Braille for the needs of blind persons nor does it limit the application of the act regulating Croatian sign language and other communication systems used by the deaf and deafblind persons in Croatia.

(5) This Act does not apply to language used in religious ceremonies, nor to the use of classical languages in professional terminology.

Cultivation of the Croatian language

Article 7

(1) National language is an intangible cultural asset and an essential quality of the identity and affiliation of its people, but also an irreplaceable common communication tool used for expression and mutual understanding, and as such, it needs to be appropriately cultivated.

(2) The Government of the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: the Government) shall ensure protection and guarantee freedom of use of the Croatian language, which includes providing the legal basis for its use and development, as well as promoting the culture of the Croatian language in official and public use.

PART TWO

BASIC RULES FOR THE OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC USE OF THE CROATIAN LANGUAGE

Official use of the Croatian language

Article 8

(1) In Croatia, the standard Croatian language and the Latin script (gajica) are in official use.

(2) Written and oral communication of state authorities, state administration bodies, local and regional self-government unit authorities, as well as legal persons with public authority, i.e., all public law authorities in Croatia, is conducted in standard Croatian.

(3) By way of derogation from paragraph 2 of this Article, in specific situations local idioms can also be used.

(4) Normative acts, administrative and other official documents may also be issued in other languages, but only accompanied by a legally valid version in standard Croatian.

Use of the standard Croatian language in international cooperation

Article 9

(1) When appearing in the international arena, in official and protocol situations where written and oral translation is provided, as a rule, public law authorities of Croatia and their representatives shall use standard Croatian.

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(2) In international communication and when informing the international public, a foreign language shall be used as necessary.

Language editors and language editing services

Article 10

(1) The authorities referred to in Article 8, paragraph 2 of this Act shall ensure language editing of the standard Croatian language used in normative acts, strategic planning acts, official publications and their accompanying annexes, as well as in reports and other documents within their jurisdiction.

(2) The tasks referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be ensured by state authorities and state administration bodies through the employment of language editors, while other public law authorities may also ensure these tasks through external editing services.

(3) In order to ensure terminological consistency and standardisation of the Croatian language in official use, in their work, the language editors shall abide by the provisions of this Act, as well as by the provisions of other acts governing the use of the Croatian language, if not contrary to the provisions of this Act.

(4) In order to ensure terminological consistency of standard Croatian in official documents at the national and European level, the language editors in state authorities and state administration bodies shall systematically report to the Croatian Language Council referred to in Article 17 of this Act on terminological doubts or lexical gaps in the Croatian language related to new terms and concepts within their scope of work.

(5) In order to ensure alignment of the Official Gazette, the official journal of the Republic of Croatia, with the Croatian version of the Official Journal of the European Union, the language editors referred to in paragraph 4 of this Article shall report to the division within the ministry competent for foreign and European affairs, which shall collaborate with the Croatian language services in the institutions of the European Union and shall have its representative in the Croatian Language Council referred to in Article 17 of this Act.

(6) In order to achieve mutually harmonised solutions at the national and European levels, the division within the ministry competent for foreign and European affairs referred to in paragraph 5 of this Article, shall conduct, when necessary, language consultations with the competent services of the institutions of the European Union in charge of translation and legal editing.

Public use of the Croatian language

Article 11

(1) The public use of the standard Croatian language shall include any oral or written linguistic communication in spaces intended for the public or a wider audience, including electronic notifications.

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(2) In addition to the use of standard Croatian in unofficial occasions, public use of dialectal idioms of the Croatian language is also possible in order to encourage and promote respect of specific regional uniqueness.

(3) Standard Croatian shall serve as the means of informing the public and consumers about products and services on the market in Croatia.

(4) Public announcements and promotional messages in spoken, written (printed or handwritten), or electronic form shall be issued in the Croatian language.

(5) Multilingual public announcements and promotional messages, including the content of traffic and tourist signs, shall first be stated in the Croatian language and then in other languages, including local names.

(6) In media content, Croatian dialectal idioms may be used alongside standard Croatian, especially when there are artistic reasons for doing so, as well as in dubbing foreign-language films and theatre performances for all age groups.

Use of the Croatian language in education

Article 12

(1) Teaching and other forms of educational work in educational institutions in Croatia shall be conducted in standard Croatian at all levels.

(2) In cases where communication in dialect is more understandable to the participants, educational staff and participants may use some of the other forms of the Croatian language in parts of the communication, while the subject of Croatian language shall be taught in entirety in the standard language, except where required by linguistic-methodological templates, literary or media texts, and in spontaneous activities.

(3) Besides in the Croatian language, education of children belonging to national minorities shall also be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the act regulating education in the language and script of national minorities in Croatia.

(4) Teaching and other forms of educational work may also be conducted in a foreign language, in accordance with the regulations governing educational activities in Croatia.

Promotion of Croatian language learning

Article 13

(1) The government shall promote the learning of the Croatian language in Croatia and worldwide.

(2) The Ministry competent for education (hereinafter: the Ministry) shall adopt curricula for regular education and programmes for preparatory and additional classes for students with no knowledge or insufficient knowledge of the Croatian language, as well as programmes intended for foreigner nationals and descendants of Croatian emigrants in Croatia and abroad.

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(3) Relevant state and public institutions shall support learning Croatian as a foreign, heritage, or second language, as well as learning about Croatian culture through various forms of educational activities for all those who wish to learn the Croatian language.

(4) The school subject Croatian language in primary and secondary education shall be implemented so that in each grade (each school year), at least half of its content is directly focused on linguistic topics, i.e., on oral and written expression (listening and speaking, reading and writing) in standard Croatian, its vocabulary, grammar and orthography, functional styles, history, dialectal idioms, literary usage, and translation.

(5) The government shall take special care to cultivate the learning and preservation of the Croatian language and culture among Croats and their descendants living outside Croatia, as well as promoting the standard Croatian language worldwide by encouraging its teaching in foreign educational institutions.

Croatian language proficiency in the process of acquiring citizenship and for the purpose of practicing a profession in Croatia

Article 14

In the process of acquiring Croatian citizenship, knowledge of the Croatian language is regulated by a special act on Croatian citizenship, while the required level of Croatian language proficiency for practicing certain professions in Croatia is prescribed by a special act on regulated professions and the recognition of foreign professional qualifications.

Special provisions regarding official and public use of the Croatian language

Article 15

(1) Croatian toponyms (names of places and geographical locations) are part of the Croatian linguistic heritage and are protected at all levels of official and public use.

(2) In public use, the names of cultural, sports, entertainment, and professional events, scientific conferences, events, and facilities shall be stated in the Croatian language, while in the case of translation into foreign languages, the Croatian version shall be given first.

(3) In international official communication, the foreign language version may be used first.

(4) A text written in a foreign language which is being published in a publication co-financed by funds allocated from the State Budget of the Republic of Croatia must include a summary in standard Croatian.

(5) In multilingual publications co-financed by funds allocated from the State Budget of the Republic of Croatia, the text in standard Croatian shall be given precedence.

(6) Manuals for the Croatian language and textual content from Croatian linguistic heritage, which are financed by funds allocated from the State Budget of the Republic of Croatia, shall be published on websites in a free electronic format ensuring their unrestricted use.

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PART THREE SYSTEMATIC AND EXPERT CULTIVATION OF THE CROATIAN LANGUAGE

National Plan for Croatian language policy

Article 16

(1) To protect, ensure freedom of use, and promote the development of the Croatian language, the Government shall adopt the National Plan for Croatian Language Policy (hereinafter: the National Plan), which shall include a list of priority goals and measures.

(2) The National Plan shall cover the matters of public and official use of the Croatian language as defined by this Act and the provisions of other acts regulating the use of the Croatian language, including an analysis of the current state, and in particular, an elaboration of the following issues:

- a) social role and legal status of the Croatian language in Croatia and in the international context
- b) promotion of the use of the Croatian language in official and public use
- c) advancement of language technologies for the Croatian language through the use of electronic (digital) lexicography, Croatian language computer corpora, and open access to digitised Croatian language publications, as well as other public online language services, including autonomous and semi-autonomous machine translation programs
- d) development of terminology in the standard Croatian language within the framework of standardisation and language planning
- e) promotion and improvement of Croatian language learning among foreign nationals and descendants of Croatian emigrants in Croatia and abroad.

Croatian Language Council

Article 17

(1) The Croatian Language Council (hereinafter: the Council) is an advisory body established by the Government, whose work shall be focused on the protection, cultivation, and development of the Croatian language.

(2) The seat of the Council shall be in the ministry competent for culture, which shall handle administrative, technical, and legal tasks for the Council.

(3) The Council shall be made up of a president and fourteen members, Croatian language experts, who shall be appointed by the Government at the proposal of the ministers competent for education, science, and culture.

(4) Candidates for members of the Council, including the president, shall be proposed by the following institutions and professional associations, as well as by the state administration body that collaborates with Croatian language services in the institutions of the European Union:

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- the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts
- Matica hrvatska (Matrix Croatica)
- the Institute for the Croatian Language
- the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography
- the National and University Library in Zagreb
- public universities in Croatia (the University of Zagreb, the University of Zadar, the University of Rijeka, the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, the University of Split and the Juraj Dobrila University of Pula)
- the Croatian Philological Society
- the Croatian Literary Translators' Association
- the Croatian Society of Conference Interpreters
- the ministry competent for foreign and European affairs.

(5) The institutions and professional associations referred to in paragraph 4 of this Article may propose multiple candidates for members of the Council.

(6) From among the candidates proposed by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Matica hrvatska, the Institute for the Croatian Language, the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, and the National and University Library in Zagreb, five members shall be appointed to the Council, with one representative from each of the institutions referred to above.

(7) From among the candidates proposed by public universities in Croatia, six members shall be appointed to the Council, with one representative from each university.

(8) From among the candidates proposed by the Croatian Philological Society, the Croatian Literary Translators' Association, and the Croatian Society of Conference Interpreters, three members shall be appointed to the Council, with one representative from each association.

(9) One member shall be appointed to the Council from the division within the ministry competent for foreign and European affairs which collaborates with Croatian language services in the institutions of the European Union.

(10) In addition to the president, the Council shall also have a vice president, elected by the members of the Council at the inaugural session by a two-thirds majority of all members.

(11) The term of office for members of the Council shall last four years, and the same person may be reappointed once.

(12) The method of operation of the Council shall be further regulated by its Rules of Procedure, which require prior approval from the Ministry.

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(13) The Ministry shall initiate the procedure for election of new members of the Council no later than six months prior to the expiry of their term of office.

Operational scope of the Council

Article 18

The operational scope of the Council, as the Government's advisory body, shall encompass:

- a) cultivation of the Croatian language
- b) promoting the culture of the Croatian language in official and public use
- c) issues regarding protection of the richness of the Croatian language, the diversity of dialectal idioms and their specific functional uses
- d) suggesting the adoption of measures for protecting, ensuring freedom of use and promoting the development of the Croatian language
- e) participating in the drafting of the National Plan referred to in Article 16 of this Act
- f) monitoring the implementation of this Act.

PART FOUR TRANSITIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

Deadlines for establishment of the Council and adoption of the National Plan

Article 19

- (1) The Government shall establish the Council referred to in Article 17 of this Act within six months from the date of its entry into force.
- (2) The Government shall adopt the National Plan referred to in Article 16 of this Act within two years from the date of its entry into force.

Entry into force

Article 20

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

Class: 022-02/23-01/103

Zagreb, 26 January 2024

THE CROATIAN PARLIAMENT

The President of
the Croatian Parliament
Gordan Jandroković, m. p.