

Saša Janković

**Report of the
Protector of Citizens for
2014**



15 Minority News

monthly newsletter on the life of minority communities in Serbia

january / february / march / april 2015

RESEARCH



The Commissioner
for Protection of Equality

**Indirect discrimination is not
recognized by 41% of members
of the public authorities**

Top news of
the month

**Constitutional
session of the
Council for
National
Minorities
held**



Special news



Challenges in front of newly elected national councils of national minorities

Good response, intensive discussion and exchange of opinions, are characteristics of the first round table in this year organized by Centre for Migration Studies.

On 28th April 2015 in Hotel Moscow in Belgrade was organized a round table, for the first time in this year, aiming to identify key challenges in front of national councils of national minorities for the forthcoming 5 year period.



OSCE: Documentary film on national councils of national minorities released

Documentary film Neighbors (Komšije) showcasing achievements of national councils of national minorities in protecting the rights of their members in Serbia was launched as a part of the OSCE Mission program for protection of human rights and non-discrimination.



Let's keep in touch

office@minoritynews.rs

INTRODUCTION

Questions and answers- from June shall be launched a new column in bulletin

- For a long time we have been thinking about introduction of a new column into our bulletin- the one which would be practical, very particular and intended to assist national minorities, members of national councils and others to learn how to solve certain problems or situations using experience of those who had already overcome similar situations.

We have been thinking for a long time, not because we are slow thinkers ☹ but because it is not an easy task to launch such column. One has to maintain the column regularly, from one issue to another, to remain relevant and to have strong connections both with those who need the advice and those who are ready to share their experience with others. Primarily, we had to define whether such column made sense. It was an easy part of the task since, in the course of our conversation; we established that differences in enforcement of the rights of national minorities in Serbia were so big that one could think that certain national minorities lived in two completely different legal systems. While members of one minority were extremely satisfied, since each of their minority rights was fully respected, on the other side there were members of national minorities who didn't manage to obtain any of the rights they were granted by law. We believe that sometimes solution could be found if one member trained the other, if they shared their experience and assisted to another being in a difficult situation giving advice based on own experience. And in the end of the day, we are very pleased to announce that we think that we are ready to officially launch the column "Questions and answers" from the next issue and at the same time we hereby invite our readers to contact us should they have any questions pertaining to rights of national minorities or any problem or face with any situation related to a fact that you are member of the national minorities in Serbia. We also invite all those readers who have had either positive or negative experience, and particularly those who successfully solved a certain problem, to contact us and share their experience with our readers since their experience can be precious to those who haven't found an adequate solution to their problem yet. You can contact us via email: info@minoritynews.rs.



In Serbia live members of 30 different national communities!

www.minoritynews.rs

right place for everybody

Challenges in front of newly elected national councils of national minorities

At the very beginning of the meeting the participants were welcomed and greeted by Director of the Centre for Migration Studies Ms. Biljana Jovic who thanked representatives of the national councils on support and successful cooperation and joint efforts that had been invested in the Minority NEWS Project for three years.



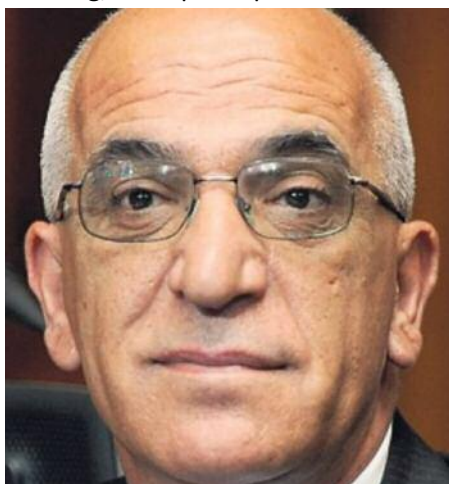
On 28th April 2015 in Hotel Moscow in Belgrade was organized a round table, for the first time in this year, aiming to identify key challenges in front of national councils of national minorities for the forthcoming 5 year period.

Ms. Biljana Jović said that it was the best moment, after election of the National councils and new membership, after the impressions have finally settled down, to discuss about key challenges in front of councils in the forthcoming period, by the end of mandate and even after it by 2020 when is envisaged to have Serbia as fully-fledged EU member state. Inter alia, she reminded the participants of a very significant task focused on improved legislative frame, as one of the most significant tasks in the forthcoming period as well as expected opening of chapters 23 and 24 in the negotiation process with European Union. After the introductory address by Ms. Biljana Veljovic, who was a moderator of the meeting, the participants were ad-

ressed by first key speaker Mr. Esad Dzudzo, serving several years in office of the President of the Bosniak National Council, being member of the parliament for 12 years and Vice President of the Coordination of the national councils. Mr. Dzudzo greeted the present participants in ten languages being in use by national minorities in Serbia and that served as a clear message that national minorities have to understand each other and cooperate even better and closer. Mr. Dzudzo brought back to 5 key legal documents on the basis of which members of national minorities in Serbia are trying to exercise their rights. He underlined the following: Constitution of the Republic of Serbia from 2006, Law from 2002 and Law on national Councils

of National Minorities from 2009, mandatory international documents- Framework Convention for protection of National Minorities ratified by our country in 1998, European Charter on Regional Minority languages adopted in 2005 in then Federal Parliament. Mr. Dzudzo reminded that the Law does not contain definition of National Councils of national Minorities and that the most precise definition was given by Constitutional Court abolishing certain provision of the law stating that the National councils of national minorities are non-governmental bodies of minority self-governments. He called to mind that state representatives almost always underscore that rights of national minorities are far beyond international standards, contrary to his opinion and he thinks that the rights are far below standards set forth by Framework Convention. He also emphasized that he shares such opinion with independent and unofficial EU experts paying visits to our country.

Mr. Dzudzo also highlighted that national minorities in central Serbia are not in equal position with minorities in Vojvodina and that in particularly bad position are Albanians and Bosniaks while even Bulgarians are not in a much better situation. He stated that national minorities have to struggle for equal implementation of rights on the whole territory of the Republic of Serbia, especially in the field of education. In addition, Mr. Dzudzo underlined that national minorities in central Serbia have 0 seconds of program broadcasted



Mr. Dzudzo also highlighted that national minorities in central Serbia are not in equal position with minorities in Vojvodina and that in particularly bad position are Albanians and Bosniaks while even Bulgarians are not in a much better situation.

The Law does not contain definition of National Minority Councils

in mother tongue on public service Radio Television of Vojvodina while he didn't want to mention how many programs do national minorities living in Vojvodina have on 6 languages of national minorities broadcasted via two other channels of the public service. He underlined that Article 17 of the Law on National Councils of National Minorities very clearly and precisely binds public services to enable broadcasting of program on mother tongue of national minorities. Mr. Dzudzo informed the participants that the budget earmarked for national minorities, even though formally established, has at disposal very small amount for 2015 that is about 3 million Serbian dinars (RSD) being insufficient to ensure collective and individual rights of the members of the national minorities particularly bearing in mind economic rights that would be allocated from the same fund. He underlined that economic rights are very important because of the fact that members of the national minorities live in economically neglected regions of our country. Mr. Dzudzo emphasized that none of material monuments of Bosniaks culture has been conserved, restored or renewed. He added that a Working group tasked to develop Action



"A number of the provisions of the Law can't be applied in practice since there are no clear provisions related to sanctions ensuring efficiency in implementation of the Law."

Riza Halimi

Plan was established and that the members of the WG are members of national minorities.

However, according to his experience Mr. Dzudzo stated that the main problem of the legislative frame is lack of sanctions, and he supported the statement with a fact that 38 amendments to the Law submitted in 2002 were rejected and each amendment referred to sanctions against those who didn't respect collective rights of national minorities. "Therefore, these are not laws but declarations, if there are no sanctions stipulated for cases in which collective rights are jeopardized" concluded Mr. Dzudzo.

As far as law enforcement institutions are concerned and monitoring of implementation of rights of national minorities, Mr. Dzudzo underlined that powers of the Office for Human and Minority Rights are so minor that it is almost senseless to address them with any kind of problem. Upon the introductory remarks of Mr. Esad Dzudzo, the participants were addressed by the second key speaker Mr. Riza Halimi.

He reminded the participants of the promise that the Law on National Councils of the National Minorities would be amended by the end of 2014, after the Constitutional Court declared certain provisions non-constitutional but it is still unclear why these actions are delayed. Mr. Halimi emphasized that the fact that a number of the provisions of the Law can't be applied in practice since there are no clear provisions related to sanctions ensuring efficiency in implementation of the Law.

He emphasized that official use of languages is not at all applied in municipalities where, in addition to Serbian, is used a language of a national minority since workers who should be using both languages are avoiding to do that because they find it easier to conduct work in Serbian language. There are examples in which provisions are applied but these examples are mostly related to official use of Hungarian language. As far as the use of Albanian language in municipalities Presevo and Bujanovac and particularly Medvedja is concerned, in terms of court proceedings for example, they are led exclusively in one language. A judge who should be working and using both languages in particular way exerts influence on parties who, due to swiftness of procedure, accept to have

the proceedings led only in one language. As another example Mr. Halimi mentioned that executors do not speak a language of the minority and therefore is not possible official use of the national minority language. As an example he mentioned the Higher Court in Vranje and Prosecutors Office who didn't have translators/ interpreters for Albanian language at disposal. Mr. Halimi brought to mind the consequences of the forthcoming privatization of local media in languages of the national minorities since the explanation stating that through taking shares workers could become owners of media was not true bearing in mind that those who used "Dinkic shares" can't become owners of shares in local media. In particular, in a medium in Bujanovac, out of 140 workers only three workers didn't use the shares and the three of them are newly employed. With reference to the Law on school textbooks Mr. Halimi is not optimistic and believes that the Law shall not provide any better way for solution of a very complicated problem regarding school textbooks in languages of the national minorities. Again the situation is different in Vojvodina than in other parts of Serbia. For example, when it comes to a school textbook in Hungarian language in Vojvodina, it is not necessary to have the textbook translated into Serbian prior to obtaining approval for use of the textbook in schools since there are members of national minorities who are present in state institutions and take care that the textbook is in compliance with laws and regulations of the Republic of Serbia. However, when it comes to a school textbook in Albanian language the situation is different. Due to amendments of regulations, translation into Serbian is not an obligation of a state authority any longer but the obligation has been transferred to a publisher who doesn't receive any kind of reimbursement to receive such responsibility and the National councils don't have their own funding sources to deal with such professional issues. Mr. Halimi underlined that the National Councils of national minorities have a certain role in terms of proposals and recommendations but no executive role in terms of adoption and implementation of decisions. After Mr. Riza Halimi the participants were addressed by Mr. Enis Imamovic, Member of Parliament. He underscored that apart from the legisla-

A judge who should be working and using both languages in particular way exerts influence on parties who, due to swiftness of procedure, accept to have the proceedings led only in one language

tive frame are also important the circumstances through which we are observing the legislative frame and that the legislative frame has to be founded in international chapters, conventions and documents and also supported by the fact that it is followed by reports of international organizations and institutions. He particularly emphasized a report of the Minority Rights Group issued last year and stating that Albanians, Bosniaks, Roma and Croats are nations in Serbia are in immediate danger of becoming extinct. Mr. Imamovic mentioned that the Minority Rights Group is a non-governmental organization with advisory status in UN. "It is the first signal of warning" he added. As the second signal of warning he mentioned the third report of the advisory committee pertaining to implementation of the Framework Convention which also states that Albanians and Bosniaks are left behind by Belgrade. Mr. Imamovic holds that in such circumstances one has to take into consideration both legislative frame and implementation of the adopted laws, underlining that there are laws which are excellent but have minimal coverage on the field. Mr. Imamovic emphasized that importance of relation between the state and national minorities had increased from the previous year level when Serbia officially became a candidate for accession to EU and that it is very important how we are perceived by the world. Mr. Imamovic reminded of the amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities which, according to his words, brought additional confusion into the already confusing system and didn't, as it had been announced, treat the electoral issues. The Law itself creates a problem in its foundation since it doesn't define the National Council of the national minorities and therefore it is not known whether it is an advisory body, non-governmental organization, state authority, independent body or something else. Mr. Imamovic briefly estimated that elections for national council of national minorities held last year were conducted under very difficult circumstances and that the law didn't regulate many important issues amongst which perhaps the most important was financing of electoral lists, rights and duties of electoral lists etc. After Mr. Enis Imamovic, the participants were addressed by Mr. Marcelo Dragan, repre-

sentative of the National council of the Romanian national minority, who said that in the Republic of Serbia is not adequately ensured political representation of national minorities, noting that political presentation of the less represented gender is better ensured and efficiently applied. While he was introducing evolution of the National council of the Romanian national minority, Dragan underlined that from the very beginning the council separated cultural autonomy from political presentation. He explained that the Council started from a presumption that a political party doesn't have the same interest as a national minority. Currently the membership of the National council brings together 10 non-party persons while others are members of the League of Social Democrats, Democratic Party, New Democratic Party, Romanian Party, Democratic Movement of Romanians in Serbia and Serbian Progressive Party. Dragan emphasized that all members of the council are primarily Romanians and then members of a political party and in order to illustrate the relation to political parties he mentioned as an example that the National Council was not present at the celebration of 20th anniversary of the League of Social Democrats even through the President of the council Mr. Danijel Petrovic is a member of the League of Social Democrats. Dragan finally added that he believes that Serbia doesn't have a strategic approach to inclusion of national minorities into the public life and regardless of the fact that it might have the best laws for protection of national minorities in Europe; the current state of play is not the best since it lacks a quality implementation of the laws. After Mr. Marcelo Dragan the participants were addressed by Mr. Bodin Radojevic from newly established National Council of Montenegrin ethnic minority. He informed the participants that the Montenegrin council, regardless of the fact that it is the youngest one, is very specific in many aspects. The most specific thing is that due to a number of historical circumstances in Serbia lives additional Montenegro. Mr. Radojevic underscored that Montenegrins are well integrated into the society of Serbia and illustrated the fact stating that since introduction of multi-party system in Serbia, amongst the first three Presidents of the Republic even two of them were 1st generation descendants of immi-



Elections for National Minority Councils held last year were conducted under very difficult circumstances and the law didn't regulate many important issues amongst which perhaps the most important was financing of electoral lists, rights and duties of electoral lists etc.

Enis Imamović

grants from Montenegro. He underlined that a number of Montenegrins oscillates in comparison to political circumstances in Serbia and that according to 1991 census there was 139 000 Montenegrins while in 2002 there was 69 000 and in the latest census there was 38 500 registered Montenegrins in Serbia. In spite of that, Montenegrin national minority holds 6. place in Serbia and 4. in Vojvodina in terms of its population. In addition, Mr. Radojevic explained that there are situations in which Montenegrin ethnic minority feels like being in an unequal position. As example he mentioned the politics promoted by Provincial Secretariat for Public Information according to which financial support shall be provided to already existing informative newspapers of national minorities while the new ones stand no chance to be supported by the Secretariat. Then he highlighted that the situation, in terms of cultural institutions, is even worse for newly established councils and that there is no possibility to ensure state support to the work of these insti-

Serbia doesn't have a strategic approach to inclusion of national minorities into the public life and regardless of the fact that it might have the best laws for protection of national minorities in Europe; the current state is not the best



One of key issues, issue of political presentation of national minorities is not adequately resolved and there are examples for neighbouring countries such as Croatia and Romania which have resolved the issue in a better way

Darko Sarić Lukendić

tutions and therefore, if they wished to continue to work on protection of their culture, they would have to find another source of financing.

After Mr. Bodin Radojevic delivered his speech, Ms. Biljana Jovic invited the participants to take part in discussions. The first one who took the floor was Mr. Darko Sarić Lukendić, president of the Croatian National Council who drew attention to unequal position of those communities which are about to build their institutions since, in practice, the state earmarks more resources to those communities with already developed cultural institutions than those which are about to create them and thus do not receive any funds. Mr. Sarić Lukendić then underlined that one of the key challenges in the forthcoming period will be reflected in the measure in which the national councils shall be included in the negotiation process with EU and in which measure shall the state perceive the efforts made by councils in the course of the negotiations as benevolent.

Finally, he emphasized that one of key issues that is issue of political presentation of national minorities is not adequately resolved and that there are examples for neighbouring countries such as Croatia and Romania which have resolved the issue in a better way. Then the discussion was joined by Mr. Mirko Bajic, president of the National Council of the Bunjevci ethnic minority who in-

formed the participants that the Bunjevci ethnic minority had had its national council since 2003 and that the minority had no "acquired" right. He urged that the state, when allocating funds, introduces principle of "positive discrimination" for those national minorities without so called "acquired right". Mr. Bajic added that according to the law it is possible to create a cultural institution, for example, but the institution shall have no source of funding and consequently the right is deprived even though it exists formally.

The discussion was joined by Ms. Dusanika Popovic from the Office for Human and Minority Rights who underscored that, in global terms, our legislative frame is excellent but when it comes to its implementation, a number of things is not functioning and the practice shows that there are many things that have to be amended and changed. She drew attention to several statements addressed to the Office for Human and Minority Rights indicating that the Office for Human and Minority Rights has a small scale of jurisdictions and brought to attention that the Office was established by decree of the Government as a professional service and didn't participate in decision-making process related to its competencies. She stated that information presented by Mr. Enes Imamovic, being a part of the Report of the Minority Rights Group as non-governmental organization, were not appropriate for such meeting since these conveyed a message that certain national minorities are to become extinct.

In his reply Mr. Enis Imamovic repeated that the Report of the Minority Rights Group is the report which the United Nations consider as proper and concluded that it would be good if the Office for Human and Minority Rights treated it with due respect. Then he briefly outlined recommendation of the Third opinion of the Advisory Committee, recommendations of Resolutions of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 1985 as well as recommendations made by Mr. Stefan Füle, Commissioner responsible for enlargement and European neighbourhood policy. The representative of the Office for Human and Minority Rights explained that the Office had produced comments on Third opinion of the Advisory Committee which were later adopted by the

Government and the comments were transferred to the Council of Europe in June 2014. She added that the Office is responsible to follow applied measures and not to bring them since their adoption is under the jurisdiction of ministries and other public authorities. In reply to Mr. Imamovic regarding insufficient presentation of minorities in state bodies with public authorities she answered that The Office had conducted a survey in units of the local self-government and reminded that according to the Constitution members of national minorities are obliged to declare themselves as members of national minorities. Finally she informed the participants that according to results of the survey, structure of the personnel in the local self-government units reflects the structure of population, more or less, and digressions are very small. Ms. Slavica Mandić from the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government informed the participants that activities related to amendment of the Law on National Councils of National Minorities are ongoing but the changes can't be seen in few months. She invited the present participants to take part in the Law amendment phase explaining them that their involvement would make the whole procedure more efficient bearing in mind that they are criticising given solutions in practice after many missed opportunities to participate in their creation. Finally she invited all participants to who think that they cannot exercise any of their rights to address the Ministry in writing and the Ministry shall surely respond.

Mr. Riza Halimi also felt an urge to react and stated that he believes that people on the field are well aware of the situation and in accordance to their presentation in public authorities they accept or do not accept that public authority and therefore it might be even more relevant fact than impossibility to collect data on adherence to national minority amongst the personnel in public authorities. In the end of the meeting, Minority NEWS used the opportunity to interview the present participants about strategic goals of the Minority NEWS bulletin and to invite the national councils, again, to take active part in development and creation of the bulletin while in light of future activities they expressed a common wish to see Minority NEWS even in other forms.

Commissioner for Protection of Equality: In 2014 indirect discrimination still not recognized by 41% of representatives of the public authorities



Public opinion survey shows that major predisposition towards discrimination is present in relation to LGBT people, members of other ethnic communities and religious minority communities.

Majority of the population shares the opinion that the society we live in is discriminating, while even two thirds of the surveyed believe that discrimination is present in our country. The citizens estimate that the most discriminated cate-

gory in Serbia are women (42%) and Roma population (41,5 %), and then follow disabled persons (28,4 %), poor people (27 %) and elderly people (24,5 %), children (18,6 %) and members of sexual minorities (16,4 %). More than 1/3 of

**Građani ocenjuju da su
najdiskriminisanije u Srbiji
žene i Romi**

the surveyed thinks that discrimination is the most present during employment procedures. The major ethnic distance is present towards Albanians, Croats, Bosniaks and Roma while the greatest social distance is present towards LGBT

Diskriminacija prema Romima najviše je izražena u oblasti obrazovanja, zapošljavanja, zdravstvene zaštite i stanovanja



Deca romske nacionalnosti i deca sa smetnjama u razvoju i invaliditetom najčešće su diskriminisana u obrazovnom sistemu, u predškolskim ustanovama i školama

population and persons suffering from AIDS. Main findings of the survey regarding position of the public authority representatives towards discrimination in Serbia: With reference to representatives of the public authorities, the survey shows that they perceive discrimination as a negative phenomenon while 74% thinks that discrimination is present in Serbia. Being asked which groups are the most exposed to discrimination, the majority of the surveyed agreed (over 60%) that it was the group of the poor, Roma, disabled persons and members of sexual minorities and that employment was the area in which discrimination was the most present. The survey shows that representatives of the public authorities are just partly acquainted with anti-discrimination regulations, that significant number of the surveyed doesn't make difference between discrimination and prejudice nor mobbing and discrimination. Indirect discrimination is not recognized by 41% of the representatives of the public authorities. The surveyed believe that representatives of the public authorities have prejudice towards certain groups, particularly towards LGBT population, members of religious minorities, persons suffering from AIDS, Roma and dis-

abled children. It is disturbing that almost half of the surveyed believes that discriminated groups are to be held accountable for their own position and that "tolerance of diversity went to another extreme position and therefore now minorities (ethnic, sexual) enjoy more rights than the majority". Key problems in ensuring protection against discrimination:

- national origin discrimination: Discrimination towards Roma is the most noticeable in the field of education, employment, health protection and housing;

- discrimination towards refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants and asylum seekers: 43.763 of refugees and more than 200.000 internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija, amongst them 1.369 lives in 22 collective dwelling centres;

- discrimination on the basis of invalidity: High level of unemployment, low level of education, poverty, political non-representation, violence particularly affecting disabled women, risk from institutionalisation and troublesome approach to public venues, areas and services;

"Iz pritužbi se može zaključiti da se pripadnici nacionalnih manjina često osećaju diskriminisano, posebno u postupcima zapošljavanja ili na poslu, pred organima javne vlasti, čak i u situacijama kada nema povrede prava na ravnopravnost"

Nevena Petrušić

- discrimination of persons suffering from AIDS: exposed to discrimination and stigmatization in almost all areas, from treatment in health centres, reaction of the environment and family, to the field of employment and labour.

- discrimination on the basis of gender: Domestic violence, sexual violence and other types of gender based violence occur on a daily basis;

- discrimination on the basis of age: Persons older than 50 make 26% of the total number of the unemployed; - discrimination of children: Children of Roma nationality and children with disabilities and invalidity are the most often discriminated within educational system, in preschool institutions and schools; - discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation: Threats, hate speech and direct forms of violence are the most frequent forms of discrimination towards LGBT; even though the legal frame regulating protection of national minorities in Serbia is satisfactory, members of national minorities are feeling discriminated and surveys indicate presence of a social distance towards certain national minorities- Albanians, Roma, Croats and Bosniaks. As it was already mentioned, the majority of complaints addressed to the Commissioner for Protection of Equality pertained to discrimination on the basis of national origin. According to the content of the complaints, members of national minorities often feel discriminated, in particular in terms of employment procedures and employment itself before the public authorities, even in situations when there is no violation of right on equality. In October 2014 were held elections for national councils of national minorities and

Prema podacima istraživanja MICS 2014, samo 6 odsto dece iz romskih naselja uzrasta od 3-4 godine pohađa programe predškolskog obrazovanja

Položaj romske nacionalne manjine u Srbiji i dalje je loš, često su izloženi otvorenom i rasprostranjenom govoru mržnje

according to estimations of the national councils themselves, organization of the elections was better than on previous occasion, without major irregularities that could affect regularity of the elections. In the end of mandate of previous national council of national minorities, the Provincial Protector of Citizens (Ombudsman) conducted a research on enforcement of the Law on National Councils of National Minorities. The research showed that the national councils were the most active in implementation of the vested powers in the field of education, official use of language and alphabet and culture, while the least activities were notified in implementation of the powers in the field of information. The national councils were the most active in implementation of their powers in the first two years upon adoption and effectuation of the Law. Pursuant of a decree adopted in January 2014, the Constitutional Court of Serbia confirmed that certain provisions of the Law on councils of national minorities were not in compliance with the Constitution. Bearing in mind the fact that the Constitution defines four areas in which members of national minorities, through their elected national councils, in order to protect their identity, can exercise additional collective rights (education, culture, information and official use of language and alphabet), the Constitutional Court, inter alia, established as unconstitutional provisions vesting powers to national councils in other areas relevant for protection of identity of national minorities and ascertained that a provision setting forth authorities of national councils regarding so called institutions of particular importance for national minorities did not meet fundamental standards of determination and predictability being a key element in establishing principles of the rule of law. The Information on official use of language of national minorities in administrative units of the local self-government in central Serbia was stated that all administrative units of the local



self-government in which was introduced a minority language in use did have HR capacities for use of the minority language. The data indicate that oral and written communication is maintained even in a minority language which is in official use but the data do not reflect the scope of administrative procedures conducted in the languages. The documents stated that reasons for such situation in terms of administrative procedures conducted in minority languages could not be determined and that national councils of national minorities believed that main reasons were that members of the national minorities were not aware of their rights and the personnel in the self-government units was insufficiently trained. With reference to issuance of certificates from the registers (birth/ death/marriage) and conducted procedures in the field of registers, it was stated that bilingual forms of certificates were not issued only in those local self-governments in which Bulgarian language was in official use. Position of Roma national minority in Serbia is still bad and they are often exposed to open and widely distributed hate speech and discrimination towards Roma is the most prominent in the field of education, employment, health protection and housing, as is indicated in the complaints addressed to the Commissioner for Protection of Equality. Even though there are certain developments in terms of the position of Roma national minority, it is needed to undertake a whole line of measures in order to make substantial improvement. It can be proved by a fact that Roma civil sector advocates for redefinition of current policies, as well as current and sporadic actions and introduction of holistic approach to resolution of problems of pub-

lic policies towards Roma minority. Roma children are still discriminated in education system and in previous years were recorded cases of segregation of Roma children in education. According to data obtained in the course of a research conducted by MICS 2014, only 6% of children living in Roma settlements, age 3-4 years, attend pre-school education programs. In the overall population 97% of children meeting the age requirements for school entrance attend the first year of school in comparison to 69% of children from Roma settlements. In addition, 89% children from overall population, age 14-18 years, attend secondary school in comparison to 22% of children from Roma settlements, being the same age. The data are alarming and more than disturbing. The Report on "Meeting and monitoring health protection quality standards of Roma in Serbia", based on activities conducted in 2014 presents that expected life expectancy of Roma in Serbia is 12,4 years shorter in comparison to life expectancy of the overall population in Serbia; general standardized mortality rate of Roma in 2011 was for 28% increased than mortality rate in Serbia and mortality rate of Roma children by 5 year of age was twice bigger in comparison to overall population. In the end of 2014 was designed an Initial Study for development of Strategy on Roma Inclusion in Serbia aligned with Europe 2020 Strategy which shall serve as initial basis for second Decade of Roma. New Strategy shall be focused on education, employment, housing and health and particular attention shall be paid to gender equality, position of internally displaced Roma, improved position and protection of children as well as protection of cultural identity of Roma.

Izveštaj "Ostvarivanje i praćenje standarda kvaliteta zdravstvene zaštite Roma u Srbiji" sprovedeno 2014. godine pokazuje da je očekivana dužina trajanja života Roma u Srbiji za 12,4 godine kraća u odnosu na prosek Srbije

The Council for National Minorities held a constitutive session



The Council for National Minorities held a constitutive session on 24 April chaired by Vice President of the Government Ms Kori Udovicki who stressed out that Serbia can proudly emphasize that it presents a community inhabited by 30 national communities.

According to a press release from the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self- Government, she underlined that all national communities, with due respect of the highest international standards, are guaranteed minority rights by the Constitution. "Different national communities, with a country of domicile or without it, different in size and specifics, enjoy right on own identity and cultural self- government", said Ms Udovicki. According to her, Serbia can proudly state that it has overcome the greatest challenges of a complex heritage of multiethnic conflicts and today it starts a process of overcoming so far inefficient, ineffective politics to persons belonging to national minorities. She added that the Council, which finally convenes after six years, would do its best to ensure protection of rights and interests that the society had recognized as specific and it is determined to keep

the process out of daily politics or mandate of any Government. Ms Udovicki pointed up that the process requires change of the state's attitude to national minorities but also a change of the national minorities' members to the state.

"Različite nacionalne zajednice, sa matičnom državom ili bez nje, različite veličine i specifičnosti, uživaju pravo na sopstveni identitet i kulturnu samoupravu"

Kori Udovički

" It calls for establishment of a dialogue with clearly set frames, full respect of the state of Serbia's cultural autonomy

and identity of persons belonging to national minorities ", said the Vice President of the Government.

At the session was concluded to have working meetings held in period May-June including sectoral ministers, members of the Council with national councils of national minorities. Topics and agenda of the meeting would be proposed by newly formed Coordination of national councils of national minorities in cooperation with the Government Office for human and minority rights, as is stated in the press release. The session was attended, apart from Ms Udovicki, by Minister of Education, Science and Technology Development Mr Srdjan Verbic, Minister of Culture and Media Information Mr. Ivan Tasovac, State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Veljko Odalovic and State Secretary in the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government Mr. Ivan Bosnjak, as well as representatives of 20 national councils and Federation of Jewish Communities of Serbia.

Na sednici je zaključeno da se u periodu maj-jun održe radni sastanci resornih ministara, članova Saveta sa nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina

Report of the Protector of Citizens for 2014

In October 2014 were held, successfully, second immediate elections for national councils of national minorities. Implementation of the Law on National Councils of National Minorities, in principle produced good results but it has to be improved to ensure that more attention is paid to improved exercise of individual rights of members of national minorities in specific living situations and to decrease influence of political parties on national councils.

With implementation of the new set of media laws, if there was not enough particular attention and incentive for media programs broadcasted in languages of minorities and including topics related to the minorities, there would be very likely to face with imminent threat in practice

of deteriorated situation in terms of the minorities rights on information. Competent public (security) authorities failed to fully protect security and property of Albanian national minority after provocation delivered during the football match Serbia- Albania. The Roma are still in the worst position. In the bottom of their discrimination is structural poverty. Members of national minorities, in particular younger generations, are insufficiently proficient in Serbian language and members of Serbian community living in areas predominantly inhabited by national minorities are insufficiently proficient in the local community language what presents an obstacle to their integration. Problems related to rights of national minorities are outlined in a special part of the Report which can be seen as a whole here.



OSCE: Documentary film on national councils of national minorities released



Documentary film *Neighbors (Komšije)* showcasing achievements of national councils of national minorities in protecting the rights of their members in Serbia was launched as a part of the OSCE Mission program for protection of human rights and non-discrimination.

Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia's Democratization Department, Mr. Jan Lueneburg, said that the film would help both the minority and the majority population to better understand the National Minority Councils' role and competencies in the official use of language, educa-

tion, culture and media information.

Ms. Suzana Paunovic, Director of the Office of Human Rights and Minorities, said that the film highlighted the importance of the competencies attributed to the National Minority Councils in Serbia. She added that the Office of Human Rights and Minorities would continue to co-operate closely with the newly-elected National Minority Council members and provide support to them in implementing their respective mandates. The documentary film can be accessed on the OHMR website and the OSCE Youtube channel.



Centar za istraživanja migracija
Center for Migration Studies

This newsletter is funded by the Open Society Foundation, Embassy of the United States of America in Belgrade and the OSCE Mission in Serbia. Opinions expressed in Minority News newsletter do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Governments and organizations that fund this project.