

**What Will the Privatization
of Media Bring about?**

**Things Cannot Go from Bad
to Worse!**

Office for Human and Minority Rights

**Paunović: Serbia Is Not
Pushing Roma into Poverty**

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Janković: The Abolition of Bilingual Signs Lowers the Level of Rights

The Bosniak Community

**Roundtable on
Discrimination of National
Minorities Held**



Brankica Janković

**Most Complaints of
Discrimination on
Ethnic Grounds**

HIGHLIGHTs



The Catholic Church Helps Migrants

The Bishops of the Catholic Church in Serbia met in Subotica. The topics of the meeting were discussed by Mr Stanislav Hočevar, the Bishop of Belgrade, Msgr. Dr Laszlo Nemeth, the Bishop of Zrenjanin, and Mirko Štefković, the Bishop of Subotica. The Bishops highlighted the opportunities to help migrants and refugees passing through Serbia as a separate issue. They said that the phenomenon is beginning to spiral out of control because there is no clear international strategy or a clear stand for control of the humanitarian problem.



Celebration of Grain, Bread and All of the Bunjevac People

To crown the hard work of our farmers and as a symbol of togetherness, bread should keep our community in harmony. Dužijanica Day, one of four national holidays of the Bunjevac national minority, was officially celebrated on Monday, August 17, and was organized by the Bunjevac National Council. This year Dužijanica was held as part of the XIV Festival of Bunjevac folk creativity, which is included in the events of special importance of the Town of Subotica.



The Municipality of Zemun Halts Forced Evictions of Roma

Commissioner for Protection of Equality, Brankica Janković, welcomed the decision of the municipality of Zemun, which has suspended the procedure of forced evictions of the residents of the Roma settlement Grmeč in Zemun in line with the recommendations of the Commissioner, until they are provided permanent accommodation.

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EDITORIAL 19

Discrimination is Illegal

The National Councils of National Minorities, in addition to their jurisdictions, also have an important function that falls within their natural jurisdiction and is perhaps the most important of their functions. It is the function of observing and reporting on discrimination that occurs in practice, in the lives of people belonging to national minorities, which takes place every day according to a specific scenario that can make them feel unequal in our society.

Such scenarios certainly exist and should be the subject of interest of the National Councils of National Minorities. The report of the Commissioner for Protection of Equality includes complaints of discrimination on ethnic grounds, and the existence of this form of discrimination is well known, which is always the first step in combating the discrimination. The Commissioner learns about the cases of discrimination on ethnic grounds mostly from the National Councils of National Minorities and she strives to inform the public about those cases so that such practice becomes publicly condemned and stopped. Often, the presentation of such information in the public results in a reaction from the national authorities and international institutions and organizations, and the effect is quickly noticed. However, to make this all possible, it is necessary to encourage the common man, a member or non-member of ethnic minority, to address the National Council of National Minorities and point to the possible discrimination because there is an established mechanism which is able to prevent any form of discrimination. In addition, there is a much branched legislation, which provides a firm legal basis for the prosecution of all cases of discrimination on ethnic grounds, so that in Serbia of the 21st century it is not actually possible to keep the discrimination of people belonging to national minorities alive.

Nevertheless, discrimination based on ethnicity still exists, according to the number of complaints, and it is necessary to determine where the weaknesses of the system of discrimination lie.

30 different national communities live in Serbia!



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Most Complaints of Discrimination on Ethnic Grounds

Last year, the largest number of complaints - 124, were filed due to discrimination on ethnic grounds, said the Commissioner for Protection of Equality Brankica Janković, adding that most of the complaints were filed by the Bosniak National Council.

"The complaints are mostly related to the State authorities and the media due to discrimination against Roma and Bosniaks, mainly in the field of labour and employment," said Janković to Tanjug, who previously met with the representatives of the National Councils of National Minorities.

According to her, the representatives of national minorities mainly emphasized the use of language as an issue, especially in the field of education.

"Of all the National Councils of National Minorities, the Bosniak National Council has filed most complaints to the Commissioner for Protection of Equality so far, about the inability to use the Bosnian language. Other National Councils have expressed similar concerns," said Janković.

The Commissioner also reminded that the research of that institution has shown that there is a certain ethnic distance towards the national minorities, mostly towards the Roma, Bosniaks, Albanians and Croats.

She said that other issues that are more related to the socio - economic status were also discussed at the meeting.

"They themselves have observed the fact that they should cooperate more and raise awareness about the cases of politicization of National Councils and their roles in the social life," said Janković.

Meeting of the Commissioner and of the representatives of National Councils of



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National Minorities was organized within the project "Let Equality Become a Reality" that the Commissioner conducted with the House of Human Rights and Democracy.

Stating that the representatives of National Councils had a good and constructive meeting, Janković pointed out that it is a project that aims to fight discrimination and promote equality through

the implementation of activities in cooperation with National Councils of National Minorities.

"It was a good opportunity to personally meet and talk directly about the problems they face, and to consider how the institution of the Commissioner, which fights against discrimination, can be more accessible to them," said Janković.

According to her, an agreement was reached to organize the meetings twice a year, regardless of the end of the project.

"It was agreed to have the meetings on a regular basis, where we would make an overview and exchange experiences in terms of improving equality, primarily that of national minorities," said Janković.

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Paunović: Serbia Is Not Pushing Roma Into Poverty

Source: Tanjug

Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, said today that the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the fundamental standards of human rights protection, especially where minorities are concerned, will be respected when taking new measures by the Government, as it has been the case up to now.

Commenting on a statement of Amnesty International, in conjunction with the announcement of the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, that asylum seekers, whose claims have been rejected, will be denied the right to social assistance, Paunović said that the organization in question did not consider all the efforts that the Government has made in addressing the situation of the Roma national minority in Serbia and that all Government measures are aimed at getting Roma out of poverty and reducing discrimination against them.

Paunović reminded that, according to the Office for Human and Minority Rights, the total number of asylum seekers from Serbia in Germany in 2014 was 16,862, while in the first seven months of 2015 their number was 11,032, of which 85 per cent were members of the Roma national minority.

Paunović reminded that about 20,000 Roma are already receiving financial social assistance, which is about 16 per cent of the total number of beneficiaries of this right.

When we talk about the so-called false asylum seekers they, or any other persons who are present in the territory of Serbia, will not remain without shelter and access to basic rights, but she also pointed out that the sanctioning of non-compliance and misuse of the law cannot be considered discrimination,



pointed Paunović, adding that the Serbian Government has taken a number of steps towards greater and faster integration of the Roma in the overall social and economic processes.

It is generally known that the problem of unemployment in our country is not only the problem of the Roma minority, although within this population the per-

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centage is most pronounced, among other things, due to insufficient levels of education, added Paunović.

She also pointed out that according to the National Employment Service in 2014 there were 22,377 Roma who were seeking work.

Of that number, 1,600 members of the

Roma minority were employed. In 2014, support was provided for 62 subsidies for self-employment of Roma.

Paunović reminded that 249 entrepreneurs have employed members of the Roma minority, which has created space for their greater engagement in the private sector.

"All these activities support the fact that the measures announced by the Prime Minister Vučić will not lead in the direction of discrimination against members of the Roma minority in the Republic of Serbia, but that special care of those who live in difficult economic conditions will be taken," stated Paunović.

The applicable legal regulations in our country, including legally binding international agreements, ensure that the competent national authorities, are going to support all disadvantaged citizens within the limits of available financial resources, particularly Roma living in the most difficult economic conditions.

It is the responsibility of the state, which is diligently and regularly met, so it is understandable that the state expects all its citizens to fulfil their obligations, as well as to comply with the applicable legal regulations regarding their behaviour and actions, while respecting and not jeopardizing the rights of other citizens, said Paunović.

Amnesty International has urged the Prime Minister of Serbia earlier to reconsider the intention to actually adopt the announced law, because, in their opinion, it will condition those who have been deported to Serbia to very likely leave again.

Amnesty International stated that such measures would constitute discrimination under Article 21 of the Constitution of Serbia.

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WHAT WILL THE PRIVATIZATION OF MEDIA BRING ABOUT

Things cannot Go from BAD to WORSE

Author: Zlata Vasiljević / Source: Hrvatska riječ

Out of 72 state-owned media 13 have been sold so far ● The new owners are obliged to keep the program schedule for five years, including programs in languages of minority communities.

Serbia currently has 110 TV and 325 radio stations. Circulation of daily newspapers is 500,000 copies, while only two years ago it was 750,000. This year, estimates are that the media will get about 130 million euros through marketing, but 70 percent of that money »will go« to TV stations. Also important is the fact that over the years the amount of money in marketing has reduced, thus only two years ago that figure, instead of the current 130 million, was EUR 175 million. That is how the current media scene in Serbia looks like in figures.

What will the privatization in progress bring about, in which direction might informing go with respect to who the new potential owners of the media are, and what is the future of informing in the languages of national communities, those are the topics we are going to address in this article.

REPORTING OR PROPAGANDA

Media privatization and withdrawal of the state from media ownership is a long time subject of discussion and pro and con arguments. Finally, it seems that the state/municipal media that once existed in almost all municipalities and cities, and the founders of which were the local self-governments that funded them wholly or partially, have come to an end, since the privatization of the media must be completed by the end of October. This summer the sale of 37 out of 72 existing media in the state/municipal ownership was announced. By the conclusion of this text 13 would have been sold. Some were sold on the first try, some will seek new owners in new auctions, and some will be shut down. Certainly, in recent weeks the sale of media was marked by the news that Radio Šid was sold at a price that is 76 times greater than the initial one and that around 536,000 euros was paid for it, which is more than for Studio B, as well as the news that RTV Bačka Palanka was sold at a price that is 25 times greater than the initial one, which is a quarter of a million, although it does not own any property. Already the first auction sales have brought attention to a few names that have nothing to do with the media, but which appear as buyers of several,

primarily TV stations.

"We're still at the very beginning of this process, and it would be frivolous to give some arbitrary assessment of what the outcome of the new round of privatization of the media will be. In any case, privatization is still the lesser evil. Local media that are owned by the state,

"Let us first ask the following - where are we today? Current media image of Serbia is the worst in the last decade. It did not get this way yesterday or today, but the media have deteriorated gradually and the process of collapsing, not only of the media but also of the journalistic profession

namely local self-governments, (were) are means of authority's propaganda - with some exceptions, of course. Local authorities have treated them as their own property, where they could always come and say whatever they wanted, since nobody would ask them delicate questions. Privatization will somehow change this habit of politicians, or at least make it more difficult for local authorities to place their propaganda on the air, although we already see examples of how they, particularly the local self-governments, are trying to preserve their past 'right' to the media - illegally, of course", said for Hrvatska riječ journalist Csaba Pressburger, member of the Executive Board of the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina. Slobodan Krajnović, chief editor of the Novi Sad Radio 021, expects no major breaks in the media scene after the privatization and expects no change for the worse with regard to informing citizens. "Let us first ask the following - where are we today? Current media image of Serbia is the worst in the last decade. It did not get this way yesterday or today, but the media have deteriorated gradually and the process of collapsing, not only of the media but also of the journalistic



Journalism in Serbia has hit its bottom and I do not see how we can continue to sink

But one should ask the question whether the media owned by the government has fulfilled its role so far? Have they served the public interest? Have they been critical of local authorities?

profession, has flown gradually. Journalism in Serbia has hit its bottom and I do not see how we can continue to sink. As for the media, which should now turn to the new owners, I cannot say that the citizens of any municipality would be deprived of any information. Maybe they will be deprived of the information to which they have been used, but I'm not sure whether it was ever the information that was necessary for the public. I mainly refer to the municipal media, the privatization of which has been discussed since 2007, and for which the deadlines have been prolonged for a long time. Now we are faced with the situation where everything is done in a 'helter-skelter' manner, because everything must end by October 31", said Krajnović.

(AB)USE OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Privatization means that the media, which have survived up to now due to recurring revenues from municipal registers, will lose that source of financing, and it is feared that many will not survive.

"Yes, some municipalities will lose local information. It is certainly regrettable. But one should ask the question whether the media owned by the government has fulfilled its role so far? Have they served the public interest? Have they been critical of local authorities? Once again, with honourable exceptions, but most of these media, which will perhaps be abolished, has never had any editorial policies like the public services!", said Pressburger.

What the media can expect now is project financing, but that's where the trap called political influence lies, which, as shown by this year's competition, cannot be ignored.



"This was the first year in which the funds were distributed according to the new model. The first positive thing is that now everyone has the opportunity to participate in the competition, and shift is also evident in the fact that the committee that makes decisions by majority vote must be composed of representatives of independent media organizations and journalists' associations, where independent members of

that's not exactly the best model, and all of these irregularities should be redressed in the upcoming competitions. There were set ups, political influence, settings up of committees, but in at least half of the municipalities it has worked decently," said Krajnović, who sees the project financing as a step towards the objective information.

MINORITY MEDIA

Special feature in this story of the privatization of the media is the fate of programs that are broadcast in the languages of national communities. "The new media owners will have to keep minority programs in their current form for at least five years. What will happen afterwards, nobody knows. No radio, no television frequencies were given for a lifetime, and it should be borne in mind. Otherwise, I see no reason why the new owners, who will eventually buy electronic media that have programs in minority languages, would eliminate these programs as soon as they are given a chance. Why would they do that? On the one hand, they can compete for certain funds intended for maintenance of programs in minority languages, on the other hand it may be profitable from the marketing point of view to broadcast minority programs in regions where the minority population comprises the majority", Pressburger was optimistic.

Perhaps this optimism is in place, because support of programs in the languages of national communities was promised by the Provincial Secretary for Culture and Public Information, Slaviša Grujić, who, at the presentation of the publication of Minority media - generating capacity, emphasized that it is important for the media at local or regional

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the commission must be in the majority, which means that they can always out-vote the representatives of municipal authorities. As it turned out this year,



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level to inform about the developments in national communities, and in his opinion the existence of such media, as well as their stable funding, should not be an issue.

The privatization that is in progress is related to the media founded by the National Councils of National Communities, but they must fight for their survival in the harsh market, said the director of Magyar Szo paper, Rozalija Ekres, and her solution is merging.

"I refer to merging and joint approach to the advertisers, or the enlargement of the common market which we offer to our advertisers through our print, and now electronic, media. This means that such an approach would allow an advertiser to place his ad or commercial not to a population of 250,000 people, which makes the Hungarian population, but to 50 or 60 thousand Slovaks, 50,000 Croats and other national communities", said for our newspaper the director of the Hungarian daily paper. This is only an idea, but it could be a good thing. It is best known to the electronic media that were once merged in ANEM and participated in joint marketing, where depending on the listeners of their program, they each received a piece of the marketing cake.

WHO NEEDS A REGIONAL SERVICE?

The law requires that the state must withdraw from ownership of the media, and all media must be either privatized or shut down. However, before the adoption of the law there were some votes that called for a so-called regional public services, which would provide information to citizens on issues of importance for a specific region.

"As for the idea of regional or local public services, it can be discussed. The biggest problem would be of course the funding of such forms of public services. Citizens are not either willing to finance the provincial or the state public service, and I doubt that they would be delighted with some new charges to maintain additional media.

For me, it would be ideal if each local community would declare a referendum whether it wants the local/regional public service in their surrounding and it should finance it through subscriptions. If a local community is sufficiently mature and ready to finance its public serv-

ice that would work on appropriate principles for the public interest, they should be allowed to make it happen", stated Pressburger.

Serbia, as small as it is, is a unique example with two public services. In my opinion one public service, and in our case two, are quite sufficient. If RTV Vojvodina has a bureau in each town in Vojvodina, what is the purpose of some regional services? Maybe the fact that people who are used to live off the money from the municipal registers continue to live on other people's backs?

However, Slobodan Krajnović, who is on the "other side", or from the media that was privately owned from the start, does not look kindly on the idea of regional public services.

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months, when the real intentions of those who appear as buyers today are made known. Are they willing to invest their money or they only want to get their hands on the media to grab more of the state dinar from another source, are the interests of political parties behind it all, what interest is there for someone who invests hundreds of thousands of euros in media, knowing that he cannot return on investment, and many other issues that are open for weeks to come. I only hope it will not be as in the case of sale of the media from seven or eight years ago, when most privatizations went "wrong".

IS THERE A REPORTER HERE?

"It is often said that by the privatization of media, the citizens will be deprived of information about local topics. What are local issues? In most cases in our country local reporting is reduced to reporting in favour of the ruling parties, regardless of which party is in power.

People in the media that are in the municipal property are no longer recognized as journalists, but simply as servants who work for the current government and deal with issues imposed by it, meaning they engage in positive propaganda reporting of what the authorities are currently doing. I'm not saying it does not exist in the private media, but its presence is far less than in the municipal media", said Krajnović and underlined that the media are dominated by the parties, a process that started in the early two thousands.



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The Catholic Church Helps Migrants

Church communities can lose ownership of their cemeteries - Religious education teachers are in trouble due to combined classes

Source: Magyar Szo

U The Bishops of the Catholic Church in Serbia had a meeting in Subotica. The topics of the meeting were discussed by Mr Stanislav Hočevan, the Bishop of Belgrade, Msgr. Dr Laszlo Nemeth, the Bishop of Zrenjanin, and Mirko Štefković, the Bishop of Subotica. The Bishops highlighted the opportunities to help migrants and refugees passing through Serbia as a separate issue. They said that the phenomenon is beginning to spiral out of control because there is no clear international strategy or a clear stand for control of the humanitarian problem.

- Caritas of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Subotica has been helping migrants in Kanjiža and Subotica for months. On the border the situation is more severe, namely the Red Cross and UNHCR are not allowing us to have direct contact with refugees. They did not allow it even when the Apostolic Nuncio, Dr Orlando Antonini, visited Horgoš on Wednesday and on Thursday to distribute the aid packages - said Laszlo Nemeth.

Caritas has two containers for the accommodation of migrants which employs two people. At Horgoš, 500 aid packages were distributed and in a short time 200 thousand euros for the assistance to migrants was collected.

They also talked about the fact that the school system has much more stringent regulations in force as of September first, which is why classes with a smaller number of students are joined together so that the number of students would

reach 15 (the number of students needed for the minority classes is 5, but the Bishops say this is interpreted rather freely), which has drastically reduced the class load of religious education teachers, so the problems with the employment contracts have arisen, because schools cannot register such teachers for full-time work.

- The Bishops welcomed the Roman visit of the President Nikolić who met with the Pope at the Vatican. Both found that the Catholic Church has a very positive role in the Serbian society and that it contributes to its development. We want this to remain the case in the future, meaning this approach must be taken into consideration when returning the church property. Today, the situation is almost worse than a few years back, it almost feels that there is not only a lack of political will, but that there are also concrete steps involved in order for the certain issues not to be resolved - said

the Bishop of the Church of the Zrenjanin County.

According to the Bishop, due to the obstruction of government bodies many decisions have been lost, and the Restitution Agency has not acquired the missing documents as its duty instructs, although it is required to do so under the law.

According to him, the Law on Public Services, which is being prepared, is of crucial importance for the church, since according to the draft of the said law, the state would confiscate the property right of historical church communities over the cemeteries. According to the Bishops, this would mean that the government would practically nationalize the cemeteries owned by the churches, which would threaten the provisions of the Law on Church Communities. He added that officials have no communication with them regarding the cemeteries that were taken away from the church in the sixties by a single decision of the city, although these cemeteries have not been nationalized.

- We have been working for five years on the restitution of our parish registers, the Catholic Church has fulfilled all its legal obligations, but the process was still terminated. Serbian government simply does not answer any of our questions regarding that issue. It is incomprehensible to us, on what basis does the Minister Ivica Dačić give away official passports, as he does it in a rather arbitrary manner: some people get such passports, and some do not get any - said Laszlo Nemeth.

Catholic Bishops have stated that Serbia continues to broadcast the program of Radio Maria and expressed the hope that they will get regional and national frequencies from the relevant state organs.



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COMMEMORATION OF THE BUNJEVAC NATIONAL HOLIDAY – DUŽIJANCA DAY CLOSED
THE XIV FESTIVAL OF BUNJEVAC FOLK CREATIVITY

Celebration of Grain, Bread and All of the Bunjevac People

Source: Bunjevac National Council



To crown the hard work of our farmers and as a symbol of togetherness, bread should keep our community in harmony. Dužijanica Day, one of four national holidays of the Bunjevac national minority, was officially celebrated on Monday, August 17, and was organized by the Bunjevac National Council. This year Dužijanica was held as part of the XIV Festival of Bunjevac folk creativity, which is included in the events of special importance of the Town of Subotica.

Celebration of one of the best preserved traditions of the Bunjevac people began by gathering the participants dressed in Bunjevac national costumes in front of the Bunjevac Heritage Foundation, where the parade was accompanied by tamburitza players who then moved on to the main square where, to the delight of a number of passers-by, the Great Bunjevac round dance was played. Following the tradition, President of the NSBNM mr Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić, laid a wreath before the bust of Reverend Blaško Rajić, after which the celebration continued with the Solemn Academy in the Great Hall of the Town Hall. After the intonation of the national an-

them of Serbia and solemn Bunjevac song, the most solemn, and also the most beautiful moment of the Dužijanica Day was when this year's bandaš (lead reaper) couple Milica Tumbas and Bojan Kozma, Presidents of the Council, handed over the bread made from the new grain, with the words that "the bread symbolizes togetherness and let it therefore keep our community in harmony."

- "Dužijanica Day" is a celebration of the new wheat bread, it is a celebration of a fruitful year that we have marked for centuries in different ways. Sometimes only in the fields and on farms, and from 1911 in the church, and since 2006 the Bunjevac National Council has

picked this day for their national holiday because it symbolises the love of Dužijanica and what she represents as a custom, the essence of the Bunjevac people - said on that occasion the President of the National Council of the Bunjevac national minority.

On behalf of the town, the gathered people were addressed by the Deputy Mayor Tomislav Veljković, who congratulated the holiday, and confirmed that the Town attaches great importance to the Bunjevac people.

"This is a very important day for the Bunjevac national community, and I can say also for the Town of Subotica. For the first time this year, we have decided to include the Festival of Bunjevac folk creativity in the events of special importance for the Town of Subotica. The festival, which marks the Dužijanica Day, is extremely important for the culture of the Town of Subotica and for togetherness, since only togetherness of a range of ethnic minorities, a range of

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nations, makes this town a town of peace and a town which provides hospitality and the coexistence of all the townspeople of Subotica" - concluded Veljković.

Among the many guests who attended the Solemn Academy, was the Advisor of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Vlado Radulović. He congratulated this holiday to all the Bunjevac, and he said that the Office has had an excellent collaboration with the National Council of the Bunjevac national minority for many years, and expressed his certainty that it will continue to be so in the future.

"The National Council works well in those four areas in which it accomplishes its jurisdiction - education, information and official use of language and alphabet and culture, and I am left to hope that in the coming period the Bunjevac National Council will continue to work in the same way, and perhaps to an even greater and better extent"- he said.

The Solemn Academy was accompanied by a special program, by the reading of the Journalistic article on the first Dužijanca held in the church in 1911, and since this year the Bunjevac community marks two hundred years since



the birth of Bishop Ivan Antunović, the poem "Welcome Bunjevac and Šokac Newspaper" from 1870 was read in his honor, while the youngest members of the Bunjevac cultural center "Tavankut", who are taught an elective course of Bunjevac speech with elements of national culture at the "Matija

Gubec" Primary School, talked about the importance of bread.

The program was embellished by the folklore ensemble BKC "Tavankut" with a number of Bunjevac folk dances. After the Solemn Academy, the guests and participants of the "Dužijanca Day" moved on towards the restaurant "Spartaks", where the Bandašica round dance was traditionally played.



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The program was embellished by the folklore ensemble BKC "Tavankut"

Roundtable on Discrimination of National Minorities Held

Source: Bošnjačko nacionalno vijeće

P Vice-President of the Bosniak National Council, Vasvija Gusinac, participated in the round table in Belgrade organized by the newly appointed Commissioner for Protection of Equality, Brankica Janković, for the representatives of National Councils of National Minorities in Serbia within the Project "Let Equality Become a Reality," which is funded by the Government of Norway.

In her address, the Vice-President of BNV Gusinac spoke about the economic discrimination against Bosniaks and citizens of Sandžak, and how all reports state that Sandžak remains the most undeveloped region in the country where the index of human development is much lower compared to other regions in Serbia.

The Vice-President particularly emphasized that the denial of the Bosnian language, which is present as the topic in the media these days through the representatives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, is inappropriate as it delves into the violation of the right to identity and human dignity. Bosniaks have always called their mother tongue Bosnian, both in the literature of Sandžak and Bosnia and

The Vice-President particularly emphasized that the denial of the Bosnian language, which is present as the topic in the media these days through the representatives of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, is inappropriate as it delves into the violation of the right to identity and human dignity

Herzegovina, and in the first Bosnian language grammar and dictionary, which was published as much as two hundred years before the Serbian dictionary. Bosnian language is standardized and recognized by all legal acts, so that every denial constitutes a violation of individual and collective rights of Bosniaks in the Republic of Serbia. Vice-President Gusinac emphasized that the acquired rights must not be denied and diminished, but must instead be respected and promoted.

Commissioner Janković invited the representatives of National Councils of National Minorities to file complaints for protection against discrimination in a greater number, as it may have effect on the improvement of the protection of their rights.



Janković: The Abolition of Bilingual Signs Lowers the Level of Minority Rights



Ombudsman Saša Janković, in a letter to the Croatian colleague Lora Vidović, expressed his regret for this decision which, as he said, "lowers the rights of the Serbian minority in Croatia," reported Tanjug.

He believes, he says, that the Ombudswoman will take advantage of the full range of her competence if she deems it necessary.

In a letter published on the website of the Ombudsman, Janković stated that, as is the case with most of ombudsmen in multi-ethnic states, including Serbia and Croatia, he is obliged to pay special attention to respect of the rights and freedoms of national minorities, including the Croatian national minority living in Serbia.

As stated accordingly, he continuously pays special attention to the consistent implementation of the laws that protect the language rights of national minorities in Serbia, appreciating the importance of the official use of minority languages for the realization of citizens' rights, but also to the preservation of all languages as part of the cultural wealth of Serbia, taking measures to provide

constant upgrade of the individual and collective rights in this area.

In the letter, Janković pointed out that a lot of justification for such an approach lies in the fact that the right of citizens, members of national minorities, to the equal official use of mother tongue and alphabet, is part of Europe's Heritage.

"Guarantee and protection of that right, an obligation which, formally and legally has been adopted by both Serbia and Croatia, and ratification of multilateral agreements and the provisions of the national legislation, ensure the preservation of the linguistic identity of people belonging to national minorities, cultural and linguistic diversity, as part of the European and World Heritage", pointed Janković in the letter.

Because of this, he believes, the decision of the town of Vukovar to abolish bilingual signs, which were written in both



Latin and Cyrillic alphabet, does not contribute to the stated goals and will certainly hamper the implementation and protection of related rights throughout the region, because extreme nationalists of all colours are going to hold onto that.

The Municipality of Zemun Halts Forced Evictions of Roma



Commissioner for Protection of Equality, Brankica Janković, welcomed the decision of the Municipality of Zemun, which has suspended the procedure of forced evictions of the residents of the Roma settlement Grmeč in Zemun in line with the recommendations of the Commissioner, until they are provided permanent accommodation.

The Commissioner urged local and city authorities to comply with the standards of respect for fundamental human rights, legal and constitutional obligations and the international regulations, in such and similar cases in the future.

She added that it is a worrying phenomenon that the demolition of illegal buildings inhabited by Roma is incomparably more common than the demolition of illegally constructed buildings that are inhabited by the majority of population.



"Such a selective approach to solving the problem of illegally constructed buildings raises serious doubts that it is a structural discrimination of Roma national minority in Serbia", stated Brankica Janković.

Residents of the informal settlement Grmeč in Zemun, received decisions from the building inspection of the municipality of Zemun in June, by which they were ordered to remove their own facilities where they live within a day, all under the threat of execution. In this settlement there are about thirty Roma families, mostly those displaced from Kosovo.



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