

Improving the System of
Protection and Exercise of
the Rights of Minorities

Results, Challenges and
Priorities at the Local
Level in the Area of
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Population

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Minority NEWS

NOVEMBER 2015



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Ruthenian Community

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Show, Bestow, Empower



Centre for the Promotion of Human and Minority Rights and Sustainable Development "Human District", on the occasion of marking the International Day of Tolerance, on November 16, at the cultural institution Parobrod in Belgrade, organized the opening ceremony of the motivational photo exhibition, of prize character, aiming at the promotion and respect of human rights.

SECOND NTC PROGRAM FOR EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS TEACHING IN BOSNIAN LANGUAGE

At the premises of the Central Office of the Council, the second, accredited professional training program, NTC LEARNING SYSTEM, by Dr. Ranko Rajović and Uroš Petrović, intended for teachers and educators teaching in Bosnian language in Tutin and Sjenica, has been completed.

"The Day of the Great People's Assembly of Serbs, Bunjevci and other Slavs" Marked

The National Council of the Bunjevac national minority, on Wednesday, in the Great Hall of the Town Hall, marked November 25 – "The Day of the Great People's Assembly" one of four national holidays of Bunjevci. On this day, 97 years ago, The Great People's Assembly was held in Novi Sad, at which it was decided to incorporate Bačka, Banat and Baranja to the Kingdom of Serbia. At the Great People's Assembly, there were 84 Bunjevac delegates who played a major role in making this historic decision.

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Differences represent the richness of a society that has them

National minorities certainly significantly paint a picture of a society, no matter how small in number they are, since the smallest national minority in a society completely changes the character of that society and sets specific standards, forms and rules of conduct in the society. Societies that perceive national minorities as a necessity, clearly express their unwillingness to change their character, and show their belief that openness and tolerance are not considered values in such a society.

A society in which tolerance is not a value but a weakness is a society that sees differences as danger and that condemns differences. Given the number of differences that exist between people, such a society can be called a society of conviction and condemnation. In such a society each member becomes a subject of conviction, rejection and discrimination at some point, and such a society can also be called a society of discrimination and fear of discrimination. It is therefore important to understand that when we talk about respect for the rights of national minorities, we are really talking about differences and about our attitude towards differences, and it is our attitude that defines what kind of society we are building and what kind of country we shall get.

It is important to understand that sometimes at the end of a side-track there is an abyss into which we shall inevitably fall into, unless we recognize that the path we have taken does not lead to the desired goal. Tracking road signs helps us find our way, and the rights of national minorities are certainly a road sign pointing towards a democratic society ruled by freedom, tolerance, justice, security ... Differences are the wealth. Without differences we cannot develop a relationship with others, or understand the world, the time and oneself. The differences help us understand how each of us is different and how each of us is in the minority, and that together we could become a majority that would see the value in differences and that would develop a positive attitude towards the differences.

Serbia is inhabited by members of 30 different national communities!



and ONE newsletter for all

Improving the System of Protection and Exercise of the Rights of Minorities

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or national minorities in our country it is very important to improve the system of protection of their rights and for those rights to be realized in practice, it was concluded at the conference on the status of national minorities in Vojvodina, in the context of integration of Serbia into the EU.

It is very important to improve the system of protection, not only of individual but also of collective rights of national minorities, and for them not to be reduced only to rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the law, but to be realized in practice, it was stated in the conclusions of that meeting.

Participants of the conference, held in the Great Hall of the Assembly of Vojvodina, welcomed the process of making the Special Action Plan for the realization of the rights of national minorities in Serbia.

The President of the Assembly of Vojvodina, Ištvan Pastor, in welcoming the participants, said that without the promotion, protection, strengthening and improving the rights of people belonging to national communities one cannot speak of a democratic society. By careful analysis of minority policies in the EU Member States, it can be concluded that "there is no unified approach to solving the problem of the rights of national minorities", said Pastor.

Hence, he added, "in the Action Plan for the negotiation of Chapter 23 there are no rules and standards of the EU that



need to be brought into conformity, but it is rather the good practice that should be included in our legislation", said Pastor.

Head of the Negotiating Team for negotiations on Serbia's accession to the EU, Tanja Mišćević, said that Serbia is doing

a good job in preparations for future membership.

"Protection of rights of national minorities is precisely the protection that must be provided by the majority", she said, adding that it is the state's obligation to protect the rights of its minorities, "especially if it is so rich with various minority communities", as is our country.

Assistant Minister of Justice and Head of the Negotiating Group for Chapter 23, Čedomir Backović, said that this special Action Plan is prepared, among other things, to strengthen the coordination between a number of institutions, whose work reflects on the protection of rights of national minorities.

The conference was attended by representatives of diplomatic missions in our country, the EU Delegation and the OSCE Mission to Serbia, Minority National Councils, Civil Society Organizations and representatives of National and Provincial Authorities and Local Self-Governments.



Miščević: Serbia Has Protected National Minorities Very Well

Head of the Negotiating Team for negotiations on Serbia's accession to the EU, Tanja Miščević, said in Novi Sad that Europe can also be proud of the level of protection of rights of national minorities that exist in our country. Serbia has thus far, even without the process of negotiating the membership in the EU, conducted the protection of rights of national minorities "in a very good manner", said Miščević at the conference on the status of national minorities in Vojvodina, in the context of a special Action Plan in the process of our country joining the EU.

She noted that it is not only her own assessment but that relevant European institutions also assess that the "level of protection of the rights of national minorities is one of those which Europe can be proud of".

According to the Third Report of the Council of Europe, as one of the last evaluations of the EU, our country is making recommendations for "further improvement and implementation of all these constitutional and legal acts in this segment", said Miščević.

Noting that it is the foundation on which the elaboration of the Action Plan is based, placed within the Chapter 23, she recalled that it is about the rule of law, as the basis for the continuation of building the institution, the society and the state, which is to become an EU member.

The protection of basic human rights and freedoms is an integral part and one of the three sub-elements of Chapter 23, which also consists of judicial reform and the fight against corruption.

Tanja Miščević pointed out that the protection of rights of national minorities is "one of the steps in the evaluation and assessment of the EU that Serbia is doing a good job in preparing for its future membership in the EU" and recalled that the protection of minorities in a country has to be provided by the majority.

Protection of rights of national minorities is "one of the steps in the evaluation and assessment of the EU that Serbia is doing a good job in preparing for its future membership in the EU"

Who is Tanja Miščević?



She was born on August 6, 1966 in Zemun, where she finished Primary and Grammar School.

She graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade in 1989, at the Department for International Relations, and in 1997 she defended her M.A. thesis on "Associate EU Membership" at the Department for International Law and Organizations.

She obtained her PhD in 2002, for her thesis on "Role of International Organizations in Contemporary Development of International Law".

She specialized in the area of European Union by attending the post-graduate studies "European studies in politics" at the FPS, University of Bonn and College of Europe in Brugge.

She first worked as a business secretary in a private company, and then at the Institute for International Politics and Economics, as a research associate.

At the Faculty of Political Sciences she was a demonstrator for English language, a trainee assistant for the subject International Organizations, and then a Docent.

She has lectured as the Visiting Professor at the University of Bonn, the Centre for European Integrations, at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, and the Faculty of Economics in Podgorica.

She is the head of International Organizations course at the Diplomatic Academy of the SCG Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Since 2001, she managed the Department of European Studies of the G17 Institute in Belgrade.

In the period from 2003 to 2004, she was the Coordinator of the SCG administration training on EU issues.

Since May 2005, she was the Head of the Serbian

Government Office for EU accession. At her own request she was relieved of duty on October 30, 2008, and later was the editor of the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia.

On November 26, 2010, the Serbian Government appointed Tanja Miščević as the State Secretary in the Ministry of Defence. Prior to that, from April 2008 to November 2009, she was a member and Vice President of the Anti-Corruption Agency's Board.

She is the author of numerous articles on theory and practice of functioning of international governmental organisations, institutional structure of the EU, and EU's enlargement policy.

She was awarded the Contribution to the Europe Year 2006 award.

She is not a member of any party. She speaks English and Russian.

Show, Bestow, Empower

Centre for the Promotion of Human and Minority Rights and Sustainable Development "Human District", on the occasion of marking the International Day of Tolerance, on November 16, at the Cultural Institution Parobrod in Belgrade, organized the opening ceremony of the motivational photo exhibition, of prize character, which had aimed at the promotion and respect of human rights.

The following day, the Forum on the theme "Gender Equality" was organized. Panel of gender equality on the occasion of the "International Day of Tolerance" promotes human rights in time of economic and social instability.

At a time of increased poverty, economic and social instability and pronounced inequality, human rights demand immediate and related operations of all parti-

cipants of the society. After the panel, the participants had the opportunity to watch a special screening of the film "Dancing in the Dark", directed by Jug Radivojević.

In the comprehensive platform, with the participation of the Office for Human and Minority Rights of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Municipality of

Stari Grad, through two days of activities, "Human District" pointed to the increased level of respect and protection of human rights and the more effective participation of institutions and local communities.

Centre for the Promotion of Human and Minority Rights and Sustainable Development "Human District" aims to raise awareness, as well as a clearer expression of the most pressing problems in the country, which often results in human rights violations.

"Human District" constantly draws attention to the need to sensitize society on the issue of gender equality and its importance.

Internacionalni Filmski Festival Ljudskih Prava
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Diversity and Tolerance Are the Advantages of Serbian Society



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erbian Prime Minister, Aleksandar Vučić, said that tolerance and diversity are the advantages of Serbian society and the best way to defend Serbia's interests and protect the country.

Speaking at the conference on the occasion of the International Day of Tolerance, dubbed "Serbia on the Way to Equality and Tolerance: Experiences of the Commissioner for Protection of Equality", Vučić underlined that diversity is the wealth of Serbia and tolerance is the foundation of its future, peace and stability.

The Prime Minister recalled that Serbia has adopted the Strategy for Combating Discrimination and the Action Plan, and allocated funds to help improve the status of vulnerable groups - women, persons with disabilities, LGBT population, older people, members of national minorities, refugees, internally displaced persons and others.

The Strategy and the Action Plan are designed measures for the implementation of which all preconditions have been provided, he explained, and added that

for the period from 2014 to 2018, 35 million euros have been allocated for the implementation of the mentioned strategic document.

According to him, in August, a special Council that monitors the implementation of the Strategy has been formed, which brought the conclusion that in the last quarter of 2014 and the first quarter of 2015, approximately 50 percent of the measures envisaged have been realized. Vučić pointed out that all countries in the world are faced with intolerance and discrimination, against which, he said, the whole society has to fight.

"I invite you to jointly come to grips with intolerance and discrimination more decisively and successfully, as well as to eradicate this phenomenon and create a society in which human dignity and equality among people are non-negotiable values which we as a society accept

because without them there is no stability and prosperity", concluded the Prime Minister.

Head of EU Delegation to Serbia, Michael Davenport, said that in the last few years Serbia has shown a commitment to further improve human and minority rights, as evidenced by the completion of work on the Action Plan for Chapter 23, which is crucial for the negotiations on Serbia's membership in the EU. Davenport underlined that no country is immune to discrimination, which affects not only individuals, but also groups of people who are often in a difficult situation, such as the Roma, LGBT population, persons with disabilities, HIV positive people and others.

According to him, we need strong democratic institutions that all citizens have confidence in, as well as the existence of a legal framework which will regulate the suppression of this phenomenon. The EU Delegation in Serbia will continue to support Serbia's efforts in the promotion of human and minority rights

Vučić pointed out that all countries in the world are faced with intolerance and discrimination, against which, he said, the whole society has to fight

through the new twinning project with partners from Austria and Slovenia, she said.

Commissioner for Protection of Equality, Brankica Janković, pointed out that Serbia is pursuing a path of equality, tolerance and respect for every type of diversity and human rights.

Janković added that the presence of Prime Minister Vučić in this event also confirms the commitment of Serbia to be more decisive in building a democratic, open and humane society and creating a just and legal state.

From the stereotype of any minority or marginalized group, we are able to very quickly create a bias, and then easily get to discrimination which, in spite of the visible progress in certain segments of society, is still a present phenomenon, she said.

According to her, the country in which the institutions function, in which equality, legal certainty and clear and coherent legal regulation are the basis of organization, and which provides equal opportunities to all, represents the country worth investing in, which is a reliable partner and that offers new opportunities to citizens every day.

The indispensable allies in the protection against discrimination and the struggle for equality are the organizations of civil society, pointed Janković and noted that an important part of the front against intolerance are the media.

For this reason, she explained, the Office of the Commissioner for Protection of



Equality, from this year in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Serbia, is presenting an award to journalists who make a major contribution to the establishment of such an atmosphere in the society which will have a zero point tolerance for any form of discrimination. Janković presented the awards in three categories - best TV/radio report, best printed or online article and investigative report.

First prizes were awarded to the VICE Serbia journalist, Sandra Mandić, for her investigative report "I Am PosHIVtive", TV B92 journalist, Jovana Uhrin, for the report "The Two Faces of Veternik Home" and journalist of the weekly Vreme, Jovana Gligorijević, for the article "The State Also Rapes, Does It Not?".

Second prizes were won by PG Mreža journalist, Gordana Lazarević for the report "The Case of Života Milanović", RTS journalist, Ana Šuvalija-Pešić, for the report "Life With HIV as a Fight Against Windmills", journalist of Nedeljnik, Mihailo Medenica, for the article "First-hand: The Calvary of Refugees" and journalist Ivan Petrović, for the article "Marina - The Story of a Discriminator in Each of Us".

Third prizes were awarded to VICE Serbia journalist, Petra Živić, for investigative report "Code F64", journalist Tanja Dimitrić-Mijailović for the report "Šabac students from China", as well as the journalist Sandra Iršević, for the article "Farmers without Labour Rights".



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Results, Challenges and Priorities at the Local Level in the Area of Inclusion of the Roma Population

Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities on November 10, 2015, organized a meeting on the achieved results, challenges and priorities at the local level in the area of inclusion of the Roma population within the project “Strengthening the Role of Local Roma Coordinator in Local Self-Governments in Serbia”, as part of the technical support to the Office for Human and Minority Rights.

The project is implemented by SCTM through setting up of communication mechanisms and information exchange of SCTM with its members through the work of the Network for Roma issues, which concern the provision of support to towns and municipalities in Roma inclusion and improving the status of Roma.

Ivan Milivojević, Assistant Secretary-General for Services to Members in SCTM, spoke in the introductory part, and recalled that the Network was established in July of the current year, and that members of the Network consists of 83 local self-governments, with 113 members, and the Network of Roma coordinators will further develop and strengthen, including the increase of their number in order to increase the coverage from the present 47 municipali-

ties to over 60, according to local needs. Dejan Mirković recalled that the process of inclusion of Roma in Serbia is also monitored through the mechanism of the Seminar with the European Commission on social inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia, and that the operational conclusions from the Seminar represent the guidelines of the state of the Republic of Serbia for future work on Roma inclusion programs.

He pointed out that expert support of the local self-government units is essential in the creation of local Action Plans and strategic documents as well as the very process of local reporting towards the national level on the implementation of strategic documents.

During the meeting, Vladimir Djurić briefed the participants on the status of

employees in the towns/municipalities dealing with the inclusion of Roma and the Guide which is in the final stage of preparation for coordinators for Roma issues at local level. Emphasizing the goal and the structure of the Guide, he stressed that the problem of improving the status of Roma at the local level is not only linked to the realization of human and minority rights, but it also has a social dimension that is presented in the Guide itself.

The aim of the new Strategy for improving the status of Roma in Serbia for the period 2015-2015, whose adoption is expected by the end of the year is to establish, by using all available capacities and the already established “good practices” related to solving the problems of Roma, the mechanisms in local self-governments that will continuously implement strategic measures in a rational and economic manner.

The project is financially supported by the Kingdom of Sweden, and implemented by the OSCE Mission to Serbia.



PRIORITY OF ENROLMENT OF CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS AND THE FIRST GRADE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN RUTHENIAN LANGUAGE

STIMULATIONS FOR PRESCHOOLERS AND FIRST GRADERS

Decrease in the number of students in Ruthenian classes in primary schools and preschool institutions, as well as the problem with the lack of children for elective classes in Ruthenian language in many schools - is one of the topics that has long occupied the Ruthenian community.

During the summer, representatives of the National Council (NC) of Ruthenians have organized visits to the Regional Offices of the National Council (RO NC) in all places where Ruthenians reside, where the hosts talked about the specific problems of a given place in areas where National Councils have competencies - education, information, culture and official use of language and script. Thus, certain difficulties in the functioning of Cultural-Artistic Societies, work of sections, and financial problems have been perceived, but in almost all places, the topic that has particularly concerned the Ruthenian community was the education in Ruthenian, that is, studying and fostering the mother tongue in places where Ruthenians live.

More and More Ruthenian Children in Classes in Serbian Language

Meeting in Vrbas accentuated the problem of fostering the Ruthenian language in the Preschool Institution (PI) "Boško Buha", while fostering the mother tongue with elements of national culture in

primary schools in Vrbas is well implemented. It is not the case at the preschool level, so the issue of establishing groups for fostering the Ruthenian language in PI "Boško Buha" was initiated.

The absence of groups in Ruthenian language at the preschool level has a very negative impact on the (in)sufficient number of children enrolling in the first grade of primary school in schools where regular teaching is in Ruthenian (in Kucura and Djurdjevo), and Ruthenian children, or those from mixed marriages, are enrolled in classes in the Serbian language. This has been the case for the second year in a row in Djurdjevo, where no students were enrolled in the first grade of primary school in their mother, Ruthenian tongue.

At a similar meeting, in the RO NC in Kucura, the problem of decreasing number of children enrolled in the Ruthenian class of primary school was also accentuated, and on that occasion some solutions for motivating parents to enrol

their children in classes in Ruthenian language were suggested.

The basis for future enrolment of children in schools in Ruthenian language currently lies in preschool institutions, because regardless of the knowledge that the number of Ruthenian children in Kucura is much higher, in the Kucura department "Grica" of the Vrbas PI, only six children were enrolled in the Preparatory classes in Ruthenian this school year, of which only three will be enrolled in school next year. This school year, 59 students started the first grade of primary school in Kucura, of which ten enrolled in the Ruthenian class, so the priority of work of the NC in the field of education will be preschools and first grades of primary education, through material stimulation of parents in mixed environments. There was also doubt about these stimulations, but it was outweighed by the fact that several other National Councils stimulate members of their national minorities in a similar manner.

- The National Council stimulates parents of preschool children in the manner that those who have now enrolled their child in the Preparatory class of PI will receive 3 thousand dinars per month, and they have committed them-



Children enrolled in the preschool institution receive 3, and those enrolled in the first grade of primary school in the Ruthenian language receive 5 thousand dinars per month each, during the school year, namely in Djurdjevo and Kucura

selves by the contract to enrol their child in the primary school in the Ruthenian language after preschool.

We have a situation in Djurdjevo, where teaching in Ruthenian is regular, that we lost a class in Ruthenian due to the lack of children, and Kucura will probably have to deal with the same considerable problem next year. It is precisely due to these stimulations provided by the NC, that eight children are already enrolled in such a preschool class in Djurdjevo, which gives hope that next year in this place we will once again have students in the first grade of primary school in the Ruthenian language - says the President of the Ruthenian NC, Slavko Rac, and highlights:

- Children enrolled in the preschool institution receive 3, and those enrolled in the first grade of primary school in the Ruthenian language receive 5 thousand dinars per month each, during the school year, namely in Djurdjevo and Kucura. In addition, NC provides a 5 thousand dinars stimulation in the form of scholarships to the top 10 students who enrol in the Ruthenian class of Grammar School in Ruski Krstur - said the President of the NC, Slavko Rac, adding that the widespread problem of reducing the number of children perhaps most affects smaller national communities.



According to Rac, the line Ministry, "does not meet the needs" because "it poses as a competition" for the elective subject.

- When children and their parents can choose between, for example Informatics and mother Ruthenian tongue, then many opt for Informatics. That is why we have requested from the Ministry of Education that, if the child chooses the mother tongue, he or she may have another elective subject. Thus, "the more attractive" classes would not pose a competition to the mother tongue. And all other National Councils have the same objection, so we hope that this will

be resolved positively - concluded Rac.

In the first grade of Primary School "Petro Kuzmjak" in Ruski Krstur, where the entire primary school teaching is in the Ruthenian language, this school year there are 37 students, and in the preparatory preschool group of the Krstur department "Ciciban" of the PI "Bambi" from Kula, there are 55 children enrolled - in both cases two times more than the previous year. It is interesting that the entire "Ciciban" this year has more children than last year, because together - in both preschool and day care - there are 140 children enrolled.



School in Ruski Krstur is specific because it involves both the primary and the secondary education, which is reflected in its name - Primary and Secondary School with Dormitory "Petro Kuzmjak". This school year there are 521 students, and in the first grade of the General Grammar School in the class in Ruthenian (the only such gymnasium in the world) - there are 22 students. In addition to the Ruthenian, the teaching in the Grammar School is conducted in the Serbian language in two classes, and the course of Tourist Technician is also in Serbian language. The dormitory houses about 60 students, and the boarding capacity is 80 places.

Mother Tongue Not to Be an Elective, But a Compulsory Subject

At the Working Meeting of the Coordination of National Councils of National

When children and their parents can choose between, for example Informatics and mother Ruthenian tongue, then many opt for Informatics

Minorities, which was held on 19 and 20 September in Kovačica, the Board of Education had the most items on the agenda, which also included representatives of the Board for Education of almost all Councils of National Minorities in Serbia, including the President of the Education Committee of the Ruthenian NC, Melanija Rimar.

Textbooks in the language and script of national minorities and textbooks for the subjects of interest to national minorities were one of the topics of the meeting, thus many amendments that should be part of the final version of the Regulation on the plan of textbooks for primary schools were suggested.

- Ruthenians have all textbooks for regular classes in their native language (translated from Serbian language), and also author textbooks for the Ruthenian language – ABC books, readers, and Music Education from the 1st to 6th grade, and for the 7th and 8th grade in preparation, and textbooks in which there are additional texts about our national community.

We need a textbook for the elective subject of National tradition and this title has been entered into the Plan, and a textbook for Religious Education for the 3rd and 4th grade of primary school has already been written, which will probably soon be printed.

We have the right to amend the textbooks for the subject of Nature and Society for the 3rd and 4th grade with additions relating to Ruthenians on 20 to 30 pages - said Melanija Rimar, after

the meeting in Kovačica. In the middle of November, at the Institute for Advancement of Education, the Working Meetings with representatives of National Councils were initiated, related to creating these additions for certain subjects in minority languages.

Amendments to the Regulation and Curriculum in primary schools, primarily of the elective subject status - Mother tongue with elements of national culture - were also a major topic of the Coordinating Committee for Education. National Councils ask that the mother tongue is no longer an elective but a compulsory subject both in primary and in secondary schools, which would be graded, and the grade would be calculated into the GPA.

- One of the important demands, and for the Ruthenian national community probably the most important, is for the Ministry of Education to approve a group learning the mother tongue of at least 5 students per school. For now, the Ministry allows a group in which there are at least 15 students, and in most schools where regular classes are in Serbian, especially in larger cities, we do not have such a large number of registered students from the 1st to 8th grade, which means that, if it stays that way, it shall be possible to learn the Ruthenian language only in certain schools - said Melanija Rimar.

In the Coordination it was concluded that the Ministry of Education was asked to engage an educational assistant for a national community that, within a certain district, has education in its mother tongue, given that the school manage-

ment has no educational advisors who understand the language of that national minority.

- The Coordination requires that such educational advisors or associates, are ensured a job in half, or 30 percent of working time, and for us, Ruthenians, the school Administrations in Novi Sad and Sombor are important, so we seek an advisor who would know Ruthenian for both school Administrations - added Rimar.

According to the latest findings, as stated in the Council for National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, which was held on November 3, the Ministry of Education began reviewing and resolving that issue.

However, despite the measures already initiated and some future measures to be taken by the National Council of Ruthenians, the number of students in Ruthenian classes, especially with regular teaching in the Ruthenian language, is rather small.

The reason for this is that parents, even though they are Ruthenians, more often enrol their children in classes in Serbian language. In such a situation, what remains to those accountable in the Ruthenian community is to continuously, with all forces and at all levels, influence the parents' awareness and promote the positive aspects of learning their mother tongue, so that tomorrow they would enrol their children in Ruthenian classes with regular or elective subjects.

Because, like other national communities in Serbia – we have the right to education in our own language, but we, as it would appear – are increasingly not using that right and we do not respect it.

Overall, in the elective classes of Ruthenian language with elements of national culture in this school year there are 379, and in regular classes in Ruski Krstur, Kucura and Djurdjevo there are 412 primary school students.

Optional classes of Ruthenian are organized for high school students in Novi Sad, where this year a section in Ruthenian language for preschoolers also began.

At the beginning of the new school year, the classes of Ruthenian language as the elective subject also began - mother tongue with elements of national culture in places or municipalities where Ruthenians reside. In two primary schools in the Šid municipality and its regional departments in Bikič and Bačinci, the classes in Ruthenian language are attended by 52 students from the first to the eighth grade, and in Novi Sad Ruthenian elective classes are organized in 10 primary school, in two school in Kula there are 26 students, in several schools in Vrbas there are 95 students, in Novo Orahovo (Municipality of Bačka Topola) 19, and in Bačka Topola itself, there are 16 students. In Savino Selo (Municipality of Vrbas) Ruthenian class as an elective subject is attended by 10 students, in Sremska Mitrovica 15, and in addition to there being regular classes in the Ruthenian language in Kucura and Djurdjevo, classes have been organized in the form of an elective subject, so that in Kucura (Municipality of Vrbas) such classes are attended by 32 students, and in Djurdjevo (Municipality of Žabalj) by 35 students.

National Councils ask that the mother tongue is no longer an elective but a compulsory subject both in primary and in secondary schools, which would be graded, and the grade would be calculated into the GPA

SECOND NTC PROGRAM FOR EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS TEACHING IN BOSNIAN LANGUAGE

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n the premises of the Central Office of the Council, the second, accredited professional training program NTC LEARNING SYSTEM, by Dr. Ranko Rajović and Uroš Petrović, intended for teachers and educators teaching in Bosnian language in Tutin and Sjenica, has been completed.

The program is accredited by the decision of the Institute for Advancement of Education of the Republic of Serbia, and was published in the catalogue of programs for professional development of teachers 2015/2016 and carries 20 points.

In addressing the participants, President of the Executive Board of the Bosniak National Council, prof. dr. Hasim Mekić, said that the Bosniak National Council recognized the quality of the NTC learning system that includes the representation of motor and thought activities in teaching, and that with this kind of learning, the quality of teaching in the Bosnian language is raised to a higher level, which is one of the highest priorities of the Bosniak National Council.

Having regard to the capacities and

needs of teaching in Bosnian language, in cooperation with the Bosniak National Council and authors of the program – Dr. Ranko Rajović and Uroš Petrović, it was agreed that certain education and upbringing institutions in Tutin and Sjenica may, through their teachers and educators who attend the seminar, possess a license for the implementation of the NTC program.

The author of the program, Dr. Ranko Rajović, in addressing the audience during the second day of the seminar stressed that the NTC system of learning helps children to easily learn, to better remember and connect what they have learned, which is the basis of functional knowledge, and on that knowledge the country's GDP depends. Mr Rajović also pointed out that by helping children, we help ourselves.

NTC license confirms that the staff of an education and upbringing institution is trained to implement the NTC program in the daily work with children. The procedure for obtaining a license entails attending seminars, the implementation of the program into practice for at least a month with the analysis of the program implementation.

Accredited professional development program, NTC LEARNING SYSTEM, is a two-day program held on 27 and 28 November 2015. In the previous period, the program was realised for teachers and educators from Novi Pazar who are already in the final stage of the procedure for obtaining a license, and expert analysis of program implementation in practice.

The costs of the program shall be borne by the Bosniak National Council in order to improve the quality of teaching in the Bosnian language.



VISIT OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVE TO THE BOSNIAK NATIONAL COUNCIL

T

he representative of the British Embassy in Serbia, First Secretary for Political Affairs, Ms Lucy Meizels, visited the Bosniak National Council.

The aim of the visit was for the Secretary for Political Affairs at the Embassy of the United Kingdom to directly get acquainted with the work and activities of the Bosniak National Council.

Representatives of the Council introduced Ms Meizels to the activities, plans and programs of the Council and problems in the realization of the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of Serbia in the field of education, culture and information and official use of language and script.

Representatives of the Council specifically highlighted the problems faced by Bosniaks in Sandžak, which are also mentioned in the last report of the European Commission on Serbia's pro-

gress: Bosniaks are underrepresented in state enterprises, the police, the judiciary and public administration authorities; Sandžak is among the least developed areas in Serbia where there is no infrastructure and investment; and the fact is that unemployment rate in Sandžak has reached 60 percent and that the largest number of the unemployed is the youth.

Representatives of the British Embassy in Serbia were welcomed, on behalf of the Council, by the Vice President of the Council, Vasvija Gusinac and the President of the Executive Board of the Council, Hasim Mekić Ph.D., and the Secretary of the Council, Ahmedin Škrijelj.



CREATING CONDITIONS FOR BNC TO CONTINUE ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKING GROUP



On behalf of the Bosniak National Council, the President of the Council, Dr. Sulejman Ugljanin, sent a letter to the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister of Serbia, President of the Assembly of Serbia, the first Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and current OSCE Chairman, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Minister of Justice, Minister in charge of European integration, the Head of Serbia's negotiating team with the EU and the President of the Working Group for drafting the Action Plan for the realization of rights of national minorities within the negotiating Chapter 23, and informed them about the problems due to which a representative of the BNC resigned from the Working Group.

The President of the Council called on them, in accordance with their powers and the power of his authority, to help him eliminate the existing obstacles in order for the Bosniak National Council to continue its work in the Working Group.

“The Day of the Great People’s Assembly of Serbs, Bunjevci and other Slavs” marked

The National Council of the Bunjevac national minority, on Wednesday, in the Great Hall of the Town Hall, marked November 25 – “The Day of the Great People’s Assembly” one of four national holidays of Bunjevci. On this day, 97 years ago, The Great People’s Assembly was held in Novi Sad, at which it was decided to incorporate Bačka, Banat and Baranja to the Kingdom of Serbia. At the Great People’s Assembly, there were 84 Bunjevac delegates who played a major role in making this historic decision.

After the intonation of the national anthem and the ceremonial Bunjevac song, guests were addressed by the President of the National Council of the Bunjevac national minority, mr Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić, who looked back on this holiday with words that November 25 is a historic date in the history of Bunjevci, and all other people living in Vojvodina.

97 years ago, Bunjevci have chosen their path and played a key role in the annexation of Bačka, Banat and Baranja to the Kingdom of Serbia. The historian, prof. Saša Marković, of the Faculty of Education in Sombor talked about the importance of celebrating this date was.

The guests were welcomed on behalf of the City by the City Deputy Mayor Tomis-

lav Veljković, who congratulated all the Bunjevci on the occasion of this holiday, and added that the City supports and assists the Bunjevac national community.

On behalf of the Republic, the Solemn Academy was attended by Jasmina Mitrović Marić, Advisor to the President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolić, who on this occasion wished the Bunjevci much health and happiness. She recalled the words of Crown Prince Aleksandar Karadjordjević, who in the Town Hall in 1919 said that “his heart is full as he is greeted by the honourable Bunjevac people, and that Bunjevci are those who will continue to contribute to our common country’s growth and prosperity”. The Solemn Academy was graced by numerous guests from both the city and

the surrounding places, as well as the representatives of the Bunjevac institutions and associations.

On the same day, in the morning, in the organization of the City of Novi Sad, the day of the Great People’s Assembly was marked.

Mayor of Novi Sad, Miloš Vučević, and President of the City Assembly, Jelena Crnogorac, President of the Executive board of the National Council of the Bunjevac National Minorities, Mirko Bajić, President of the Citizens association “Bunjevački kulturni centar - Novi Sad”, Svetlana Babić, and President of the Citizens Association “Bunjevci”, Dr. Aleksandar Raič, as well as the representatives of the Association of the Descendants of Serbian Warriors 1912-1920, laid a wreath on the memorial plaque, which is located on the building of the former Hotel “Grand”, at the place where on November 25, 1918, the Great People’s Assembly of Serbs, Bunjevci and other Slavs was held.



First Session of the BNC in the third convocation held in Sombor

O

n Saturday, November 14, at the Great Hall of the Assembly of the City of Sombor, the 9th session of the National Council of the Bunjevac National Minority was held. This was the first session in the third convocation of the Bunjevac National Council held in Sombor.

Before the start of the session, the presidency and members of the National Council of Bunjevci were greeted by the mayor Saša Todorović, expressing satisfaction with the good and successful cooperation with the National Council of Bunjevci and the Bunjevac organizations and associations that operate in the city, which refines cooperation.

A wish for good and successful work of the members of the National Council of the Bunjevci was also expressed by Vladislav Živanović, Deputy Mayor, Nemanja Sarač, member of the City Council for Culture, prim. Dr. Vlado Babić, MP from the SNS, Žika Gojković, MP from the SPO.

- The Mayor's call to hold one session of the Bunjevci National Council in Sombor, was made last spring when we, as representatives of BNC, were on a working visit. I like to come to Sombor, and I am especially pleased that this session is held in Sombor just before the anniversary of the constitution of the third convocation of the National Council of Bunjevci - said the President of BNC, mr Suzana Kujundzić Ostojić.

As the most important point in the ses-

sion, mr Suzana Kujundzić Ostojić pointed out the development strategy in all four areas of which the National Council is in charge - education, culture, the official use of language and script and the notification for the period from 2015 to 2020.

During the session it was discussed on the work of the National Council bet-

ween the two sessions, the verification of decisions of the Executive Board between the two sessions and other issues from the scope of work of the National Council.

For the Sombor Bunjevci, one of the most important information from this session was that the National Council of Bunjevci has its Regional Office in Sombor, at the address of Trg Sv. Djordja 1/I (at the Old City House), which is the path to the realization of the right of Bunjevci that they are entitled to by the law.



Brothers Together Forever

In memory of November 13, 1918, the day when Subotica was liberated in the First World War, on Thursday, November 12, at the scene, "Jadran" a traditional Solemn Academy "Brothers Together Forever" was held. Organizers of the event were the Serbian Cultural Centre "Sveti Sava", Cultural Centre of Bunjevci in Subotica, Association of Volunteer Fighters 1912-1918, their descendants and admirers, as well as the City of Subotica.

In order to always remembered the courage of Bunjevci and Serbs who, by forming the Bunjevci-Serbian National Committee, contributed to the liberation of the city, the Serbian Cultural Centre "Sveti Sava" and Cultural Centre of Bunjevci twenty-four years ago, signed the Renewed Charter of permanent and indissoluble friendship between the two people, and designed the project "Brothers Together Forever".



The solemn program of the event was complemented by the Mixed Choir of the Serbian Cultural Centre "Sveti Sava", folk ensemble and orchestra of the Cultural Centre of Bunjevci, Cultural-Artistic Society "Svetozar Marković" from Novi Sad, the Association for the cultivation and preservation of Serbian tradition "Zvuci sa kamena" from Novi Sad, dramatic artists Miloš Stanković and Dejan Andjelković who performed several songs on the flute.

The North-South Divide (Technical Modernization of Serbia)

To answer the question of why the Serbian political elite prefers a centralized, unitary state, and delays the decentralization of government, constitutional changes and the creation of systematic preconditions for strengthening of regional and local government entities, we should »take a peek« into the past, because »the roots of the present« lie right there. Namely, the fall of Smederevo in 1456, marked the cessation of a relatively independent »Serbian Despotate« which is considered the »successor« of the medieval Serbian Kingdom (Empire), and the territory south of the Sava and Danube became a part of the Turkish Empire. It lasted until the Berlin Congress (1878), when the independent state, the Principality of Serbia became recognized, which in 1882, was raised to the rank of Kingdom.

According to most historians, the former Prince, later King Milan, led an Austro-ophile policy, which was somewhat normal (e.g. at that time, the first cadastral survey was made instead of Turkish deeds, of the part of Serbia, Šumadija) according to the so-called Austrian triangulation system (which is slightly different from the one that was in force in the territory of today's Vojvodina). At his time (1881), the construction of the first railway line from Belgrade to Niš began, the so-called South railroad, which caused a very large resistance, especially in the ranks of the radicals, then the strongest political party. Nevertheless, the railroad was completed in 1884. Construction of the railway »was forced«, because it was one of the conditions for obtaining independence, established by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The railroad Subotica - (Zemun) – Belgrade was also constructed at that time, and later (1885 - 88) two branches were made from Niš, one towards Sofia, via Pirot and the other towards Skopje, via Vranje and thus the Kingdom of Serbia entered into the »modern Europe«, through the famous Orient Express. The other main railway, normal track, was built just after the Second World War and led from Belgrade to Bar (completed in 1976).

POLITICAL MODERNIZATION OF SERBIA

Technical modernization of Serbia (railway was then a »symbol of modernity and progress«) was carried out relatively quickly, and at the »insistence« of European powers, primarily because of the interest of capital and the flow of goods. But the political modernization gradually stopped, and »modern constitutions« were adopted and then withdrawn. The

political situation is best illustrated by an anecdote about Prince Milan and »his two Articles of the Constitution«. The first Article reads: »The Prince is always right«. The second Article reads: »If the Prince is not right, the first Article shall apply«. In other words, a centralized governance system that is based on one man (and the elite around him), is an inheritance of the four centuries of the Ottoman Empire, and for 137 years of independence of Serbia (and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Republic of Serbia, etc.) it seems that the concept of »governance« has not much changed (two kings were killed in the meantime, one Obrenović, one Karadjordjević and one prime minister).

The Turkish feudal system was different from the European, because everything belonged to the Emperor (or the centre). Estates and privileges were shared or seized by the Emperor on merit, there was virtually no private property, the best that people who have enriched themselves could do with their property was to establish waqfs, that is, endowments, which further existed as a kind of »independent institutions« (while the property lasted). During the Turks, the society has been spatially segregated, the cities were populated by Muslim population, and the villages by Orthodox inhabitants, in a kind of »local self-government«. The leaders of these governments were local chiefs, who were mainly responsible for tax collection and management of the local community.

Today, there are officially about twenty »cities« in the Republic, others are municipalities, often with a smaller population than one local community, for example in Subotica, and are often un-

able to »support« themselves, but they have a local self-government and administration.

HERITAGE OF SELF-GOVERNMENT

The territory of today's Vojvodina has been »tailored« mainly since the end of the Second World War. It generally covers the territory of three former counties: Bács-Bodrog, Syrmia and Torontál, or abbreviated: Bačka, Srem and Banat. Counties are historical, thousand-year old governing territories which existed in the Croatian and Hungarian part of the Monarchy and possessed a certain administrative independence which was achieved through the County Council.

The power of the county was expressed through the county palace, for example, in Sombor, the seat of the Bács-Bodrog County. Cities, especially the free royal cities, following the adoption of the civil laws at the end of the XIX century, have become cities with county authorities or municipal cities, which also had their own self-government (magistrate), had their own property, estates and revenues, with which they ruled independently (of course they paid taxes to the central Treasury), the expression of that self-governing power was the Town House, for example, in Subotica.

After the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the abolition of earlier territorial divisions, it was experimented with endless varieties of administrative divisions, but mainly the dominant one was the centralist administration (which was already mentioned earlier).

These facts have stirred conflicts between the North (Vojvodina) and the South of the country (central Serbia). Vojvodina is trying to preserve a certain tradition, respect for the administration, payment of taxes, but also through the celebration of the »Day of the City« or the APV coat of arms, which, at the »horror of the nationalists« consists of three former county coats of arms. Orient Express today exists only as a »nostalgia train«.

Will the fate of Vojvodina be similar?!



Centar za istraživanja migracija
Center for Migration Studies

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