

**Office for Human and Minority Rights**

**Media**

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# **Minority NEWS**

*DECEMBER 2015*



## **Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities**

**Jewish Community**



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## **Paunović: We Hope for Concrete Progress in the Area of Human Rights**



Serbia is on an upward trajectory in the realization of human rights, said the Director of the Government Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, who believes that next year will be marked by a series of more concrete actions in this area.

## **Two Million Dinars for the Projects of Montenegrin Associations in Serbia**



Two million dinars has been allocated for co-financing the projects of associations in the field of culture, education, information and official use of the Montenegrin language and script.

## **Drafting Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities Initiated**

On December 03, 2015, the first meeting of the Special Working Group for preparation of the text of Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities was held.

# EDITORIAL 23

## **A year goes by, solutions come**

The year of hope goes by and the year of even greater hope arrives – is what could be concluded in an optimistic editorial at the end of a successful year. It could also be concluded that another year of great expectations has passed without the expected changes, which would be appropriate for an editorial with a lack of optimism in the year of disappointments.

The editorial of an experienced columnist would certainly try to find a middle ground between the two extremes and claim that the arithmetic mean is always closest to the truth. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. In fact, it is almost never the case.

The truth is that 2015 was the year of great expectations for the National Councils of National Minorities. They expected new, better, more modern and comprehensive solutions, better cooperation with the state, a better understanding of their own needs and greater cultural autonomy. As every year thus far, it was expected that the allocation of resources to support the implementation of competencies of National Councils of National Minorities would be greater.

The State, on the other hand, expected the National Councils of National Minorities to deal with themselves and their competencies, and that the State would be left alone to do its job. Neither the expectations of the State nor those of the National Councils of National Minorities have been fulfilled, and each in its own way shall try to forget this year of failed hopes as soon as possible, hoping that the next year will be the year that will give wind to the sails of the new Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, and find the model that will bring stability and allow the minority policy to finally be implemented through the routine. Without big words and expectations, we await another year for which statistics can probably say that it is another year of unfulfilled hopes, but we have learned that when it comes to life, statistics and mathematics can be wrong.

With best wishes for the upcoming holidays, let the year 2016 bring us success and long-desired harmony between expectations and reality.

## **30 different national minorities live in Serbia**



**and ONE newsletter for all**

# Two Million Dinars for the Projects of Montenegrin Associations in Serbia

**T**wo million dinars has been allocated for co-financing the projects of associations in the field of culture, education, information and official use of the Montenegrin language and script. / The money, as told by the National Council of the Montenegrin National Minority, has been granted for projects of 26 associations on the territory of the Republic of Serbia.



Out of 29 associations that have applied for the Competition, three did not meet the prescribed requirements.

“The decision on the allocation of money was made by a two-thirds majority vote at the eighth session of the National Council of the Montenegrin National Minority in the Republic of Serbia, which was held on November 26 in the Montenegrin Cultural Centre in Lovćenac.

On behalf of the Association “Krstaš”, Ljubomir Perović presented a plaque to the National Council for cooperation and contribution to the preservation of national identity of the Montenegrin Community in Serbia”, the statement added.

## Slovak community

# Naive Art from Kovačica in Bratislava

**A**t the Gallery of the Slovak Ministry of Culture in Bratislava, until December 20, at this representative and thus far the largest exhibition in Slovakia, art lovers have a rare opportunity to learn about the comprehensive naive art of its minority in Serbia, paintings of Vojvodina Slovaks at the exhibition titled Kovačica - Naive Art Mecca of the World.

“This is the largest exhibition of our naive art in Slovakia. It includes 157 paintings, 10 footstools and 15 painted pumpkins by 63 authors”, said at the opening of the exhibition on December 3, the founder of the Babka Gallery from Kovačica, that next year marks its quarter century of existence.

This representative exhibition included all generations of Vojvodina naive painters of the Slovak minority, from the oldest Vladimir Boboš (1906 - 1978),

through the most popular naive painters from Kovačica in Slovakia, Martin Jonáš and Zuzana Chalupová, to the youngest generation, represented by the 23-year-old Sanja Stvorčova.

At the opening of the exhibition, the oldest generation was represented by Ján Bačúr, middle by Pavel Hajko, and the youngest by Michal Hraško, who had their own individual presentations within the exhibition.

Paintings, footstools and pumpkins were accompanied by a comprehensive chronicle of Ján Bačúr, 30 books of chronicles of naive art in Kovačica where, in the words of Babka, one can follow the birth of thought and play transferred onto a canvas or an object.

“The exhibition is the promotion of the Slovak naive art as an element of intangible cultural heritage of Serbia in Slova-

kia, and at the same time the affirmation of the Slovak national community living in Serbia, with which Serbia has built a relationship that, by mutual assessment, exceeds the generally accepted standards”, said the honorary sponsor of the exhibition, Ambassador of Serbia in Bratislava, Shani Dermaku.

The Ambassador recalled that the naive art of Vojvodina Slovaks is included in the national intangible cultural heritage of Serbia, and that the next step is desired to be the registration on World Heritage List under the protection of UNESCO.

The works of all 63 artists featured in the exhibition have been included in the first multimedia encyclopedia of naive art of Vojvodina Slovaks in the Slovak language, which was published last year.



# Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities

**M**inistry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government has started work on amending the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities in order to regulate the area of registration of data on ethnicity in public documents, official records, respecting the right to free expression. The Ministry expects that this Law will be adopted in the summer of the year 2016.



In his statement to Danas, the State Secretary of the Ministry, Ivan Bošnjak, said that the Action Plan for the realization of the rights of national minorities has been prepared, which is available on the website of this Ministry for consultations.

- As one of the steps to further improve the position of minority communities, we started drafting this very important

strategic document, which is part of our obligations arising from Chapter 23. The most important objective of this document is to adopt what really brings good to our citizens, says Bošnjak. According to him, one of the biggest problems is the situation of internally displaced Roma, but also the Ashkali and Egyptians originating from Kosovo and Metohija, who do not have any personal documents.

Being in this situation, indicates our source, means that one is not able to achieve basic civil rights, since one of the basic criteria to achieve them is - citizenship, "but in cooperation with the competent authorities and UNHCR, great progress has been made in order for people, who were once citizens of the former FRY, to acquire Serbian citizenship more easily."

When asked to comment on the work of National Councils of National Minorities, Bošnjak said that he was satisfied "because the representatives of the Councils recognized the Government's efforts to improve the cooperation".

- However, in addition to having to resolve all the issues that the National Councils put on the table, we also have to take care of their clearer authorisations, more transparent use of funds and reduce the excessive politicization of the work of the national councils - suggests our source. When it comes to the growing problem of hate speech, Bošnjak believes that the response to the findings of the Commissioner and the Ombudsman must be quicker and more detailed, in order to ensure the efficient processing of submitted complaints, but that it is also necessary to implement the training of judges, prosecutors and police officers "for the advancement of knowledge and skills necessary for effective prosecution of hate crimes."

## Gratitude Expressed to the OSCE Mission to Serbia

Bošnjak expressed his gratitude to the OSCE Mission to Serbia for their support and expressed his satisfaction that the Working Group, composed of representatives of state bodies, experts and representatives of National Councils of National Minorities, approached this impor-

tant work professionally and responsibly.

He also pointed out that by this move, the Serbian Government has demonstrated its strong will to improve the position of national minorities as much as possible.

The Working Group is composed of the representatives of the Ministries of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Culture and Information, Justice, Education, Science and Technological Development and Interior, National Councils of National Minorities, the Office for

Human and Minority Rights, the Coordinating Body for Bujanovac, Preševo and Medvedja, as well as the Office of the Council of Europe.

Professional and technical support throughout the entire process is provided by the OSCE Mission to Serbia.

# International Human Rights Day Marked in Niš and Prokuplje

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**he International Human Rights Day was marked this year in Niš by a series of roundtables, panel discussions, debates and street actions.**

What is considered a significant step forward in this area is the increased awareness of the different approach to the protection of national minorities in Serbia, especially at the local level.

In this context, it can be said that the civil society organizations in Niš have assumed an important and responsible role. In addition, the city of Niš and active participants of the local self-government are showing greater willingness to cooperate with civil society organizations, which will certainly lead to certain results in the future period. Roma Women Association "Osvit" from Niš, with the support of the Office for Human and Minority Rights in Niš and the Committee on Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities

of the City Assembly, organized a roundtable on the International Day of Human Rights, which was also the last day of the 16 Day Activism.

In addition to the organizers of the meeting, Ana Saćipović - in front of the Roma Women Association "Osvit", Sanja Jefić Branković - in front of the Office for Human and Minority Rights and Dragana Stojanović Krstić - in front of the Committee on Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities of the City of Niš, participation in discussion was taken by the representatives of the city, Member of the city Council in charge of social issues - Svetozar Aleksov, Director of the Safe House in Niš - Sonja Ščekić, Deputy from Niš - Dušan Milisavljević,

Community Liaison Officer of PU Niš - Marija Randjelović, representatives of the Community Health Centre, President of the Council for Human and Minority Rights of the Council of the City of Niš - Slavica Andonov, representatives of the Centre for Social Welfare, representative of the National Council of the Roma national minority and Alija Saćipović in front of the National Council of the Roma national minority.

This year, special emphasis in the context of human rights protection in Niš has been placed on the protection of women from violence and implementation of the provisions of the Convention of the Council of Europe. The reason for this orientation is the announced adoption of the Security Strategy of the City of Niš, as well as the Strategy on Improvement of the Status of Roma and the Action Plan for their implemen-

tation. These two strategic local documents would largely cover the problems of minorities, particularly the Roma in Niš.

International Human Rights Day was marked in the department of the Office for Human and Minority Rights in Prokuplje. The Office for Human and Minority Rights and the municipality of Prokuplje, organized a meeting in the form of a roundtable on the topic "Human Rights Day - the definition of priorities and key challenges for the advancement of human rights in the Toplica District."

The meeting was attended by representatives of relevant institutions, judicial authorities, local self-governments, the Centre for Social Work and civil society organizations. Department of the Office for Human and Minority Rights in Prokuplje opened a month ago.



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# Paunović: We Hope for Concrete Progress in the Area of Human Rights

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erbia is on an upward trajectory in the realization of human rights, said the Director of the Government Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, who believes that next year will be marked by a series of more concrete actions in this area.

- For us as a government it is essential to continue the upward trajectory in the realization of human rights and not to have stagnation at any moment, which I believe we have managed to secure - said Paunović, on December 10, the International Human Rights Day.

She pointed out that members of the Roma national minority and persons with disabilities, according to research, are the most sensitive social groups, but that when it comes to human rights and minority rights, what is alarming is the violence against women and bullying. However, she says, what marked the year 2015, not only in Serbia but also in the world, is the migrant crisis.

- It's quite good that Serbia has shown a concrete example of how human rights are respected and how one relates to people who are in trouble - said Paunović, adding that it best reflects the approach of the Serbian Government towards human rights and their protection.

According to her, it is not necessary to be a member of the EU, or to have the ne-

gotiation Chapter 23 opened, because for Serbia those rules apply irrespective of it being in the process of joining, practically at the initial stage.

She recalled that the year 2015 was marked by a number of activities of the Government to further improve the human rights situation in Serbia.

Recalling that all the activities were aimed at creating conditions for opening the negotiation Chapter 23, she pointed out that the Government, all the Ministries and the Civil Society were directed towards making the best possible plan of action, measures that will allow for that negotiation Chapter to be open.

- However, it was valuable for us, because we made a cross-section of the entire human rights area, from what was passed, where we have problems in the implementation and where we need to change the laws, we anticipated specific measures as at some moment it will be worked on improvement of the full implementation of legal regulations - said Paunović, adding that all this was done under the auspices of a large migrant crisis.

She also points out that there are numerous studies that indicate that the vulnerable social groups are most at risk, and that they are often related to the Roma national minority, and people with disabilities.

- We must not forget the violence against women and a large number of fatal accidents. This is something that, as a society, we should in the future be worried about even more - pointed out Paunović.

According to her, the concern is the increase in bullying, which requires more intense work.

However, she says, it is crucial that all vulnerable social groups, now find themselves in a more favourable position. Stating that the major risk for the realization of human rights constituted the economic crisis in which Serbia, before the current government, found itself in, she pointed out that the necessary economic reforms have been taken, economic growth initiated, new job positions opened, and a more favourable climate for the realization of human rights created.

- The fact is that lack of funds, and often the lack of human capacity, is an evident problem faced by the Government and local self-governments, but it does not always have to be the only justification and must not be an excuse for the realization of human rights - said Paunović, adding that it is necessary that all the laws, all the strategies and action plans are applied to the full extent.

On December 10, 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in which it was pointed out that these rights are universal and do not depend on the national, state, ideological or cultural affiliation.

This document protects the civil, political, economic, social and cultural freedoms and human rights - the right to life and freedom, including the right to dignity, privacy, social security and union.





# Shutdown of Radio Subotica Almost Certain

**R**adio Subotica, one of the first multi-language electronic media in Vojvodina, founded in 1968, on November 1, practically ceased to exist in the legal sense. After two failed attempts to sell, the Privatization Agency refused to put the radio up for auction for the third time, so this media house is faced with the possibility to go bankrupt or to be saved through the possible distribution of shares, but in another form.

The specificity of Radio Subotica is precisely in its multilingual program - with three editorial offices in Serbian, Hungarian and Croatian language, this media has also broadcast programs in German and Bunjevac. It is almost certain that only Serbian and Hungarian programs will survive, and it will be difficult to run the program in other languages.

With the date of the completion of the privatization of electronic media, all employees of Radio Subotica were fired, except for the editors in chief of three editorial offices and one journalist from each office, who maintained a minimum program content. On Thursday, November 26, conditions were made to have their employment terminated too, so that the radio is now without a single employee.

However, as the Radio has its frequency allocated until the next year, the pro-

gram would have to be broadcast until the abolition of the frequency. So far, the solution is to volunteer - and the editors in chief and several journalists have accepted to make the program on a voluntary basis, until further notice, or until there is a way to pay them for their work.

Local self-government no longer has the legal capacity to finance the radio, although the ruling political elite and the citizens have repeatedly launched initiatives to have Radio Subotica excluded from privatization, due to the specific nature of its program, and remain the local radio station that would be government funded.

The program is made in the so-called sandwich, or on one frequency in all three languages, although the radio owned two frequencies until recently. The second frequency, was assigned by RTV Vojvodina, which is its owner, to the

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media house RTV Panon, where the part of journalists of the Hungarian editorial office have transferred.

The initiative to establish a special Hungarian radio came from the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, but it has not gained support in most of the Hungarian editorial office of Radio Subotica.

"The greater part of us, nevertheless, wanted to remain in the joint radio, as a multi-ethnic and multicultural institution. Privatisation has, however, resulted in danger to have the programs in minority languages abolished", says Imre Tóth, journalist of the Hungarian editorial office of Radio Subotica. Although the initiative of AVH was accepted by the Hungarian National Coun-



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cil, thereby dismissing a petition signed by nearly 7,000 listeners of this editorial office to preserve the existing program, many journalists are not satisfied with this attitude and the decision. "We believe such decision is a bad one, and we are afraid that it is even illegal", said Tóth. The editor in chief of the Hungarian language editorial office, Ernő Németh, sees such decision as a political one.

"Now there is a new radio station, Hungarian Radio Subotica (Magyar Szabadkai radio), and the goal of the initiative was the destruction of Radio Subotica. We were objective and impartial, and that was the problem. And the decision was made by Istvan Pastor personally, says Németh.

Hungarian movement, recently established as the opposition bloc inside the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, called the new radio pirate and illegal, because the Panonne Foundation has a license for its launch, and the Executive Board of the Foundation rejected the proposal of the director of RTV Panon to enter the project.

"The Hungarian program of Radio Subotica and RTV Panon were brought into this situation through violent political decisions of the President of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians", says the Hungarian movement.

One of the proposals of journalists in the event of shutdown of Radio Subotica was to establish a separate, politically independent foundation that would stand behind the new media. The National Council rejected the proposal, and opted for this solution.

On the other hand, the National Council of the Bunjevac and Croatian community had no initiative to save the program in these languages, and because of the small size of the audience, the survival of these media based on market principles is highly uncertain.

Kalman Kuntić, Assistant Secretary for Culture and Information, said that Vojvodina was willing to continue helping the minority media, but that the initiative should come from the communities themselves.

He estimates that because of a number of programs in minority languages, which will now likely be shut down, the concept of privatization without any alternative has shown to be very poor.

"What was problematic from the start, when the main road that goes into the privatization was taken, is that no alternative was ever considered back then. These concepts of media existence, and even the local self-government media, were expensive.

One should have thought about different models then, about the possible different ways of organizing all of these media houses through the civil sector,



which was never seriously contemplated. I assume that no one ever seriously contemplated why any government, regardless of the level, found it important to help in a particular manner only what it can control", recalls Kuntić.

"The consequence is that the information in the Serbian language will remain within the private media in the city, and the media in the Hungarian language also has a chance to survive, because their community is able to finance its own media. Other minority communities will not have their own program", says Kuntić.

"And the Croatian community in Vojvo-

**Kalman Kuntić, Assistant Secretary for Culture and Information, said that Vojvodina was willing to continue helping the minority media, but that the initiative should come from the communities themselves**

dina shall remain without the three media - Radio Subotica, Radio Sombor and Radio Bač. An alternative definitely should have been considered - some commercial broadcasters of the civil sector or the so-called communitarian media, increasingly popular in Europe.

Nothing has been done, although the provincial secretariat, as the financier of these media in one part, proposed talks that would lead to the improvement of information in languages of each individual minority that was interested in it. I must say that we have never had a demonstrated willingness to have serious talks about it with the provincial administration", says Kuntić. The Director of the radio, Ljubiša Stepanović, however, claims that in the context of privatization the Serbian program is also in danger. "Here, the attention is directed to the position of national minorities and the capacities for their information, and in doing so one forgets about the majority population, the Serbs, who are otherwise treated as a majority, although they too, are a statistical minority here .... Who should come here - Ambassador Konuzin, to asks whether there are Serbs here? Who is going to represent them and their interest in this arrangement? For national councils are legitimated to represent the interests of their minority community", said Stepanović.

The further fate of the radio, or what is left of it, is thus quite uncertain. Mayor Jenő Maglai still retains some optimism. "The local self-government has provided funds to finance the Radio up until November 1, and the national budget has secured funding for the social program. However, although the city does not have much room for further manoeuvres, I would not write off the radio just yet, although the chances to save it are really minimal", says Maglai.



# Drafting Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities Initiated

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**n December 03, 2015, the first meeting of the Special Working Group for preparation of the text of Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities was held.**

The Working Group is chaired by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Ivan Bošnjak, and it is composed of the representatives of the representatives of the Ministries of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Culture and Information, Justice, Education, Science and Technological Development and Interior, National Councils of National Minorities, the Office for Human and Minority Rights, the Coordinating Body for Bujanovac, Preševo and Medvedja, as well as the Office of the Council of Europe.

Professional and technical support throughout the entire process is provided

by the OSCE Mission to Serbia.

During his presentation, the Secretary of State, Bošnjak, introduced the deadlines and the framework within which the amendments to the Law should move.

It was agreed that experts would make the Baselines that will timely be delivered to the members of the Working Group and will represent a framework for getting started. He expressed his gratitude to the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Serbia for their support and expressed his satisfaction that the Working Group, composed of representatives of state bodies, experts and representatives of National Councils of

National Minorities, approached this important work professionally and responsibly.

He also reminded those present that by this move, the Serbian Government has demonstrated its strong will to improve the position of national minorities as much as possible.

The deadline for adoption of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities set out in the Action Plan for the realization of rights of national minorities, is the second quarter of the year 2016.

The next meeting of the Working Group will be held in Šabac in the second half of December, when the Baselines, or the first Working Version of the Law would be prepared.



The deadline for adoption of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities set out in the Action Plan for the realization of rights of national minorities, is the second quarter of the year 2016.

# Call for a Public Debate on the Draft Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia (2015 - 2025)

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overnment of the Republic of Serbia has prepared a Draft Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2015 to 2025.

This document originated from the need to improve the issues of social inclusion of Roma men and women, in a systematic and comprehensive manner, both at the national and the local level, using the experiences in implementing the previous Strategy on Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia (2009-2015) and starting points for the development of new strategies.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia invites all interested parties to submit their comments from November 26 to December 17 on the Draft Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the

period from 2015 to 2025. Please send your comments by e-mail to [strategija@ljudskaprava.gov.rs](mailto:strategija@ljudskaprava.gov.rs), or by mail to the Office for Human and Minority Rights, No. 2 Mihajla Pupina Street, Novi Beograd, stating: Public Debate on the Draft Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2015 to 2025.

More information can be found on the website of the Office for Human and Minority Rights on the link <http://www.ljudskaprava.gov.rs/index.php/ru/vesti/1467-poziv-javna-rasprava-strategija-Roma-2015-2015>



## Strategy - an Important Document



State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Nenad Ivanišević said that by the end of the year the Public Debate on the Draft Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2015 to 2025 should be completed.

At the Meeting of the Council on Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia and implementation of the Decade of Roma, Ivanišević said that the Draft Strategy is an important document that in a "quality manner" defines how the Roma will be included in the Serbian society.

He said that the text of the strategy is leaning on the strategy "Europe 2020" Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and that it defines the areas that will be developed, namely: education, employment, housing, social security and healthcare for Roma.

Ivanišević said that those areas are significant not only for the life of Roma in Serbia, but for the life of all people in Serbia.

"Our focus will be to measure, by applying a clear and quantitative manner, how many Roma have been employed thanks to this strategy and how many Roma entered the health care system", said Ivanišević.

The Secretary of State said that the results of this strategy should be visible in ten years and that the strategy was conceived so that the action plans are adopted for a period of two years.

"In ten years we will be able to assess how the strategy contributed to the inclusion of Roma in Serbian society", said Ivanišević.



# Ušumović: Providing Financial Support to Minority Media

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President of the Association of Journalists "Cro-info", Ivan Ušumović, said today in Subotica that this Association insists on a stable project financing of the media reporting in minority languages.

At the panel discussion "Challenges of Minority Media" held in Subotica, Ušumović said that the funding of minority media is unpredictable and that everything depends on the "good will" of the expert commission that allocates the funds to projects by vague criteria. "In this year's national competition our Association received zero dinars due to reasons unclear to us. We asked for an explanation, but we did not get one", said Ušumović.



He said that he considers it necessary to openly criticize National Councils should they attempt to interfere with the edi-

ting of the independent media in minority languages.

"The Croatian National Council has never influenced, nor will it influence the editing of the media reporting in the Croatian language", said Ušumović and added that "the duty of a journalist is to seek answers to questions that are not asked."

President of the Executive Board of the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina (IJAV), Nedim Sejdinović, said that amendment to the Law on National Councils could provide long-term and stable funding of media contents in minority languages, founded by National Councils, as well as those which are not, but which still broadcast programs in these languages.

Sejdinović said that it was necessary to amend the Law on Public Information and Media in the area which guarantees that local self-governments, province and state shall allocate significant amounts of funds for competition pro-



ject financing through co-financing of media contents.

"Amending the law should oblige those local self-governments where people belonging to national minorities live, to announce special competitions for minority information", assessed Sejdinović.

He added that civil society media reporting in minority languages shall have a lot of support from foreign donors and the EU, but that independent editorial policy and professional reporting must be ensured.

"Amending the law should oblige those local self-governments where people belonging to national minorities live, to announce special competitions for minority information"

Nedim Sejdinović



In this respect, some bystander could conclude that the position of the President of DSHV is actually some kind of a "crown" of my previous engagements regarding the "Croatian issue" in Vojvodina



## XII EXHIBITION OF THE CHRISTMAS BREAD HELD IN MALA BOSNA

# We return to tradition

**T**he first week of December, in the second week of Advent, was once again readily welcomed by the Citizens Association "Bunjevačka vila" from Mala Bosna, which for the practice of this Association means that everything was ready for the opening of the XII Exhibition of the Christmas bread, which was opened on Sunday, December 6.

The iconic cake – Christmas bread has a special place in the homes of those who respect the customs and traditions of their grandfathers and mothers. For the older it is the work that goes around preparation of the Christmas bread and for children a game and entertainment through which they learn the best. This was obvious in the House of Culture in Mala Bosna, where among the exposed Christmas breads one could see those that were made by the children, from those who are in kindergarten, to the older grades, students from the primary school "Matija Gubec" from Tavanakut and from the local school in Mala Bosna "Ivan Milutinović".

The method of making the Christmas bread, its symbolism and figures that are placed on it in recent years is more and more becoming the topic of conversation.

A few years ago, Marija Bošnjak Maca, otherwise the initiator of the idea of preparing the exhibition of Christmas bread in mala Bosna, has published a brochure on the method of making the Christmas bread, and at this year's exhibition the visitors had the opportunity to see the film premiered on the same topic.

- After the book and the success that it has made, we came up with the idea to

turn the brochure into a film, through which the method of making the Christmas bread would be available in another format, to facilitate the work of housewives when preparing the Christmas bread - says Nela Ivić, president of the Citizens Association "Bunjevačka vila", adding that the film was made last year in the production of the Association.

In the film, the method of making Christmas bread is described and demonstrated by Marija Bošnjak, who revealed to us during the exhibition that an average housewife needs up to six hours of work for an average Christmas bread.

This year's exhibition was happily attended by both the young and the old, but also by the representatives of the Bunjevac National Council and of the City of Subotica, who addressed the audience on that occasion. While the visitors were welcomed on behalf of BNS by Kata Kuntić, President of the Committee on Culture, the Assistant Mayor of Subotica in charge of small businesses, Ljuben Hristov, emphasized his pleasure of being a part of such a beautiful event. - When I first saw these cakes I could not conclude whether this is art or something else, but I think it all together, craft, art, great will and desire to make such a nice piece of work.

Cultivate your tradition because this is something which also makes the identity of your village - said on that occasion the Assistant Mayor, and also declared the exhibition open.

The Reverend of the Church of Holy Trinity in Mala Bosna, Dragan Muharem, congratulated the visitors the upcoming saints, referring to the fact that without bread there would be no us, not looking at bread only as food but also as a way of gathering, starting from the table, and all the way to the ceremony as the exhibition.

In this sense, bread is a sign of communion and joy, and Christmas cake constitutes a kind of ceremonial bread, which lets us all rejoice and keeps us together and unique.



## Welcoming Christmas

# The Advent Wreath

A

**Advent wreath is a circle or a ring made of evergreen twigs with four candles. It is placed on the table at the time of Advent as a symbol of anticipation of Christmas. Every Sunday of Advent a candle is lit.**

## The origin and development of the Advent Wreath

The idea of Advent Wreath was originally created during Advent. The first Advent Wreath in the world appeared in 1838, in a home for poor children "Das Rauhe Haus" ("Dilapidated House") in Hamburg. The young Evangelical pastor and educator Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808-1881) brought together in 1838 orphans from the streets and offered them an old and dilapidated house as a new home. Every year during Advent he organized moments of prayer with his protégés. He noted in his diary that during the Advent of 1838, wanting to find a way to make the Advent more beautiful for his protégés, he thought of lighting a candle from the first day of December, every day during prayers. Wichern would put the candles on the wooden wreath that would shine on Christmas like a large luminous circle with 24 candles: 20 small red candles for the days of the week and four large white candles for the Sundays of Advent. Every year during Advent they would perform this brief ceremony. Since in the time of prayer a candle would be placed on the wreath and lit, that moment started being called "godliness with candles". Around 1851, Wichern's protégés began decorating the wooden wreath with evergreen branches, and over time instead of wood, they began knitting a wreath made of evergreen

branches. This custom spread by evangelical families in Germany and then to neighbouring and overseas countries. In the late 19th century, four candles for the four Sundays of Advent were used. After the First World War, Catholics began making Advent Wreaths. The first one appeared in 1925, in a Catholic church in Cologne, and then in 1930, in Munich. Around 1935, the churches blessed Advent Wreaths which were taken home.

## The Symbolism of the Advent Wreath

Four burning candles on the Advent Wreath signify the last Sunday of Advent. The Advent Wreath consists of two basic symbols - the circle and candles, or the light. The circle or ring with no beginning and no end is understood as a symbol of eternity and faithfulness. The Advent Wreath is interpreted as a

sign of God's fidelity to the given promises. Sometimes, the Advent circle is interpreted as the world, with its four sides. In ancient times, the wreath represented a victory sign, and in Christianity it has become a sign of the obtained salvation through Christ. Evergreen branches indicate that life does not cease, the eternal life. These branches also recall Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, when he was greeted by the people. Even today, the Ambrosian liturgy during Advent suggests reading of Jesus' solemn entry into Jerusalem. Candle light indicates the incoming light of Jesus. Advent candles, originally red and white, point to Jesus' sacrifice and victory. According to the long tradition, three purple candles were placed on the Wreath as a sign of penance and repentance as preparation of Jesus' coming, and one pink that would be lit as an expression of joy at the birth of Jesus. According to one tradition, the first candle is called the Prophet's candle, the second Bethlehem candle, the third Shepherds' candle, and the last candle was the Angels' candle. Gradual lighting of candles symbolises the approaching of Christmas.





Discussion on the Draft Law on the Elimination of the Consequences of Property Confiscation from the Holocaust Victims Who Do Not Have Living Legal Heirs Opened

# Serbia to Pay 950,000 Euros to the Jewish Community Annually

**D**

iscussion on the Draft Law on the Elimination of the consequences of property confiscation from the Holocaust victims who do not have living legal heirs was opened yesterday at the Palace of Serbia, and negotiations shall be held until December 18, and as pointed out, all should be in the Government by the end of the year.

According to this law, which will be harmonized with the Law on Restitution, but because of the specific manner in which this property was confiscated it requires a special legal framework, Serbia will, in the next 25 years, pay 950,000 euros to the Jewish community, every year.

Property and mobility, but also securities, seized between April 6, 1941 and May 9, 1945 from the Jews who were killed, and who have no descendants, shall be returned or compensated to the Jewish community. As some of the participants in the debate pointed out, during that time not even two to three per cent of actually confiscated property will be paid back.

All revenues will be managed by the Federation of Jewish Communities, and the funds will be used for studying and documenting the period of the Holocaust, marking important dates relating to that period, for research projects, publications, education about the Holo-



caust and the crimes of the fascists, scholarships for pupils and students, financial support to surviving Jews and the Jewish community, strengthening its links with compatriots in the world ...

How the obtained money is spent, will be controlled by the Supervisory Board, which will consist of two representatives of the World Jewish Restitution Organi-

zation, two representatives of Jewish Communities and one representative of the Government of Serbia, who would be the president of the board.

- The objective of this law is to replace the numbers with names, and in this way show the fate of the Jews in this region. In this way, we will better understand the actual processes that lead to monstrous things. This is also an issue of the relations of Serbia towards its own citizens and therefore, a civilization shift in the field of human rights, but also a way to discover the cause of the Holocaust - said Strahinja Sekulić, director of the Agency for Restitution.

As explained at the discussion, Germany has kept the most detailed inventory of property confiscated from Jews in the former Yugoslavia, and handed them over to the Government of Milan Nedić. The subsequent vagueness lies only in the nationalization of the property that followed the Second World War, but the confiscated property in contemporary Serbia, which is the legal successor of the former Yugoslavia, is far clearer than in the Czech Republic or Slovakia, where the German inventories were not so detailed.





# Magnificent Work of Professor Roth

**M** Mr Roth, by giving you a permission to translate the book into German, I violated my oath that I will never have anything to do with your people and language. Now I have given you the right to translate, because I am convinced that a professor humanist such as yourself, 70 years after the Holocaust, must be an extraordinary person who deserves me leaving the past behind, wrote Relly Alfandari Pardo, who today lives in Israel, to Andreas Roth, Professor of the German school in Belgrade.

It is about her book of memories "It was only a picnic". It is a shocking confession of this Belgrade Jewish woman who, as a girl spent the Second World War under a false name Rada Jovanović, in Number 21 Dečanska Street, hidden in the apartment of a man who worked in the auto parts store owned by her uncle Jovan Jovanović who was a merchant. She spent her days in a small pantry where she read books.

- Incidentally, my wife who is an Irishwoman, gave me to read an article by Dragoslav Simić about the Belgrade Anne Frank, published in "Politika". I immediately bought the book and it was the first book I read in the Serbian language and the Cyrillic script - says Andreas Roth (48) with unconcealed pride, a native of Essen, who has been living and working in Belgrade for three years.

## A History Lesson

The first thing he thought of when he closed the cover of the book was that it must be translated into German, with a desire to include the students, to whom

he teaches history and German, in this endeavour. What led him to this, was a visit to the Old Fairground and a surprise when he noticed that the students experience the story of the Holocaust as something completely normal.

- I was disappointed at how they had no compassion or awareness that they were standing in a place of terrible crimes. After that I was constantly thinking about how to awaken it in them. After a month, the aforementioned article led me to a book that gave me the recipe on how to get the students to best learn and understand the history - said Roth. He was concerned by the fact that in one place in the book Relly Alfandari wrote that she would never have anything to do with the Germans and their language.

- For this project I did not have to ask for copyright because it was school work. I did not want to do even that without her permission, because I could hear the words in my head that were spoken on May 8, 1985, by Richard Von Weizsäcker, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, on the occasion of the anniversary of the end of the Second World War:

"Young people are not responsible for what happened, but they are responsible for how the history will continue to flow, taking the past into account". Then, as a 17-year-old high school student, I was one of those young people. I knew I was not guilty, but also that I carry the

responsibility and I did not want to make the slightest mistake - said Roth. He introduced this idea to his colleagues, who supported him. Miloje Todorović, grandfather of one of the students, also engaged himself, and he willingly agreed to talk with friends within his Jewish community who could help.

- Soon, I was notified that they are ready to make contact with Relly in Israel, and that they will try to convince her that it makes sense to have her book translated into German by the students. Thus, in the end, I got a green light from Relly for translation - recalls Professor Roth, who wrote every detail of this endeavour in the preface to his book.

## A Visit to the Camp

The translating project involved 18 students of the German school, aged 11 to 16 years, with Professor Julijana Kušević, Roth and his wife Deirdre. Their two daughters were also involved in this project. Each of them got one chapter to translate.

- It was an interesting and instructive adventure into the world of translation for the students among whom there are Serbs and Germans, Austrians and Hungarians ...

The book saw the light of day thanks to my friend Radoslav Nedialkov from Sofia, who liked the idea and funded this



## Archive of the Soul

- I am not a writer. I wrote the book for my children, and I dedicated it to my parents and brother who were killed in the camp - said modestly in our first conversation, Relly Alfandari Pardo, whom I named Belgrade Anne Frank. Ana was born in Frankfurt in 1929, and Relly was born the same year in Belgrade. In 1942, family Frank was hiding in a secret shelter where Ana started to write a diary. During the same year, Relly was hiding in Arandjelovac, and then in Belgrade, in a secret hideout in which she recorded her archive of the soul - said for "Vesti" reporter Dragoslav Simić, author of the website [www.audioifotoarhiv.com](http://www.audioifotoarhiv.com), whose presentation of the book was the main "culprit" for Roth's idea of live learning of history through translation.

Since this is not a commercial release, all proceeds from the sale will be negotiated with its author, paid to the Jewish community in Belgrade

German edition with a circulation of 500 copies - says Roth.

**“Dear Mr Roth, The book was lucky to have arrived in your hands. Thanks to your work, ‘Picnic’ has ‘spoken German’. ‘You are now my friend’.”**

**Relly Alfandari Pardo**

Since this is not a commercial release, all proceeds from the sale will be negotiated with its author, paid to the Jewish community in Belgrade, where on November 26, a promotion of the book was held, which is titled “Delicacy” (“Zuckerschlecken”) in German.

Last spring, when they finished the translation of the book, they went one more time to the former Jewish camp on the Old fairground, where among those killed were the three family members of Alfandari. This time, students were joi-

ned by parents, teachers, and Relly's cousin Mirjana Vuisić, daughter of the merchant Jovan Jovanović.

- This time the children understood the importance and the message of that place - told us Professor Roth, whom Relly Alfandari Pardo congratulated with the words:

**“Dear Mr Roth, The book was lucky to have arrived in your hands. Thanks to your work, ‘Picnic’ has ‘spoken German’. ‘You are now my friend’.”**



## Deceived by the Title

Students Anastasija Stojanović (12) and Marko Gonja (14) participated in translation of the book “It was only a picnic”.

- I was happy I got this project. When I

started reading the book, in the beginning it was fun because the heroine is our peer, but the more I progressed the more I got sad - says Anastasia, and Marko added that he was drawn the

book's title:

- The word picnic sounds so cheerful. I was expecting a completely different content, and then I was overwhelmed because it is about a

cruel crime during the Second World War in Belgrade.

Otherwise, Relly came up with this title of the book by chance, after a meeting with a lady in Tel Aviv. When they

inquired where each one of them was during the war, Relly mentioned Belgrade and “their” pantry. The woman replied:

“It was just a picnic, I was in Auschwitz”.

# Representatives of the National Council at the Ministry of Culture and Information

**A**t the initiative of the National Council of the Roma minority, in order to improve the cooperation between the Council and the Ministry of Culture and Information, as well as to improve the Council's policies in all areas, today in the premises of the Ministry a meeting, attended by State Secretary Saša Mirković, President of the Executive Board of the Council, Slavko Jovanović, Deputy President of the Executive Board of the Council, Dragan Ristić and Secretary General of the Council, Zoran Kalanjoš was held.



In an interview with the delegation of the National Council, Saša Mirković, State Secretary at the Ministry of Culture and Information, stressed the need to launch the initiative for the participation of representatives of National Councils of National Minorities in the Republic Broadcasting Agency, as well as their active participation in the process of amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities.

On this occasion, the cooperation on launching a joint initiative for the establishment of cultural centres was agreed upon, as planned by the Strategy on Improvement of the Status of Roma and the common position was articulated that it is necessary to take advantage of

the existing capacities and improve the availability of cultural content in the existing cultural centres.

Mirković also introduced a future model of project co-financing of the Ministry of Culture and Information and stressed the need for the National Council to initiate the allocation of funds to finance projects aimed at improving information in the languages of national minorities in local self-governments, where there is an appropriate representation of members of minority communities.

Dragan Ristić emphasized that it is necessary to make an analysis of the cultural system and in cooperation of the National Council and the Ministry of Cul-

ture and Information, prepare competitions and projects that aim to improve the level of availability of cultural contents.

Slavko Jovanović presented the National Council and activities in the field of culture and information of the Roma community and noted that, based on the model of RTV, information program in languages of national minorities should be created in the Public media service of Serbia.

It was agreed to organize the next meeting, which will follow the announcement of the competition of the Ministry in the areas of culture and information in the languages of national minorities.





**Centar za istraživanja migracija**  
**Center for Migration Studies**

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