

**The Office for Human
and Minority Rights
Committed to the Monitoring
of the Minority Action Plan**

**Ivan Bosnjak: In Addition to
New Legal Solutions, the Most
Important Thing is Their
Implementation**

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july 2016

Chapters 23 and 24 in the Negotiations with the EU Opened



**The Coordination
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HIGHLIGHTs



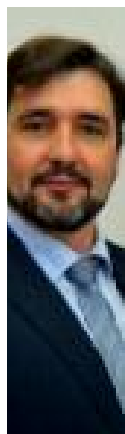
Committed to the Action Plan for the Realisation of Rights of National Minorities

The Office for Human and Minority Rights, in cooperation with the EU-funded twinning project „Support to the Advancement of Human Rights and Zero Tolerance to Discrimination “ prepared a methodology for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Action Plan for the Realisation of National Minority Rights.



Determined to Realise Their Rights

Members of the Coordination of National Minority Councils at their latest session held in Novi Pazar took a united stance regarding the realisation of the national minority rights. They will form team of experts which will consolidate all issues concerning minority rights in order to contribute to a more efficient realisation of rights and a more efficient enforcement of laws dealing with national minorities in Serbia.



A Great Number of Activities to Be Launched

„The National Minority Councils are supposed to be the main subjects or partners in the realisation of a number of activities carried out by state bodies, and partners in the monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan, with the aim of achieving a greater visibility of national minorities as an integral part of the Serbian society, “ says Ivan Bosnjak, the State Secretary in the Serbian Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.



The First Issue of a Bi-Weekly Newspaper in Bulgarian

Four years after the shutting down of a newspaper in Bulgarian, members of the Bulgarian national minority in Serbia again have their newspaper in their mother tongue. „The New Brotherhood“ will be printed twice a month, and the money for starting up the newspaper was provided by the National Council of the Bulgarian National Minority.

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Crucial Issues for a Civil State

On July 18, our state was given an opportunity to become the state organised in line with the practices implemented in the most developed European countries. Namely, we have been given a chance to start adopting and implementing laws and creating an independent judiciary as a framework that will enable the system to start resolving judicial cases quickly, and which will enable a higher level of protection for citizens and easier realisation of human rights.

Whether Serbia will build the aforementioned on healthy foundations depends exclusively on its institutions and its readiness for change. Judging by statements by the state officials, the negotiations should be completed by 2018. It is more than obvious that not much time is left to organise the whole system in order to make it happen. Chapters 23 and 24 contain many challenges – independent, efficient and professional judiciary, absence or very low level of corruption, stamping out organised crime, fight against discrimination....

As we can hear from the state officials, Serbia enjoys the full support from Commissioner Johannes Hahn and High Representative Federica Mogherini, as well as from Slovakia, the country chairing the EU. Of course, the support in the future will depend exclusively on results. It is one thing to adopt Acquis Communautaire, and it is something completely different, and certainly more difficult, to implement it.

The beginning of negotiations on other chapters depends on the progress - or the lack of it. According to some statements, Serbia is ready for the opening of other chapters – Chapters 25 and 26 on science and research, culture and education, and Chapter 5 on public procurements. However, European officials warn that the pace of Serbia's European integration process will not be determined by the speed of the opening of negotiation chapters but of the quality of implemented reforms, to which the EU will pay particular attention.

30 different national minorities live in Serbia



and ONE newsletter for all

Chapters 23 and 24 Opened

Source: Tanjug



The 3rd Serbia-EU Inter-Governmental Conference held on July 18 in Brussels saw the opening of the negotiation chapters 23 and 24 in the country's EU accession talks. The Serbian delegation was headed by Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic and the EU delegation was headed by Miroslav Lajcak, the Foreign Minister of Slovakia, currently chairing the European Council.

Upon the conclusion of the 3rd Serbia-EU Inter-Governmental Conference, Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak said that the opening of the negotiation chapters was a significant step forward in bringing Serbia and the EU closer together. „This step forward brings a powerful message – that Serbia, if it delivers on its homework, will move forward in the enlargement process,” Lajcak has said.

HAHN: AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION ARE NOT PART OF NEGOTIATION PROCESS

The European Enlargement Commissioner, Johannes Hahn, said that the Law on Universal Jurisdiction, on which amendment in Serbia's negotiations

with the EU Croatia insisted, was not a part of the negotiation process.

„This issue is not a part of Serbia's accession agreement with the EU. Therefore, it was not an issue we believed was necessary to deal with,” said Hahn.

Croatia insists that Serbia give up the prosecution of Croatian citizens charged with war crimes before Serbian courts, as provided by the Law on Universal Jurisdiction.

Serbia has been saying since the beginning that this was not an issue of accession negotiations, but a bilateral issue.

Hahn said that Serbia and Croatia in fact had similar legal solutions, but different positions on them and that this was why there existed the „Berlin rec-

onciliation process, facing the past and looking to the future.”

He praised progress Serbia had made and said that the opening of Chapters 23 and 24 would be another important step in Serbia's accession to the EU.

„Serbia is the one who is defining the speed of accession. There are no speed limits but the speed will depend on progress in crucial areas, particularly in the dynamization of relations with Kosovo and progress in the rule of law,” Hahn has explained.

JOKSIMOVIC: OPENING OF CHAPTERS IMPORTANT FOR BETTERMENT IN EVERY DAY LIVES OF CITIZENS

The minister in charge of European integration, Jadranka Joksimovic, said after the inter-governmental conference that the opening of Chapters 23 and 24 was a signal that Serbia was on a stable path and that it had been recognised as an important and serious candidate for

Dagmar Repchekova, the Slovak Ambassador to Serbia: “This is good news for Serbia, of great importance, and a significant step in good direction. At the same time, from the point of view of the EU, and particularly from the point of view of Slovak presidency of the EU Council, this is a proof that we keep our word and that we take the enlargement policy seriously, as a strategic and efficient instrument of strengthening the stability, democracy and prosperity in Europe. It’s Serbia’s turn now to persist on its accession path, and to continue implementing reforms to which it has committed itself. The speed of opening chapters will not determine the pace of Serbia’s integration with the EU; it will be the quality of implemented reforms. In this context, Serbia can count on our assistance. We are ready to help the new Serbian government to maintain the positive dynamics of the accession process,” Repchek has said.

EU membership. She stressed that work on these chapters will bring concrete betterment to all citizens of Serbia.

Asked about conditions put by Croatia in Serbia’s accession negotiations, Joksimovic said that Serbia was always ready for talks and analyses, but that there were no room for bilateral matters in the negotiation process which had clear procedures and criteria.

„A declaration which has recently been

signed by Serbia and Croatia at the highest level speaks that we will resolve bilateral issues at bilateral level, and European procedures have their rules. This is a good message for the sake of the future, so that we know the rules and procedures,” Joksimovic has said.

The minister in charge of European integration says that the opening of chapters pertaining to the rule of law is important both for new investments and the betterment in everyday lives of citizens.

According to her, work on chapters 23 and 24 means that the judicial reform will be more intensive, that proceedings will not be able to last indefinitely, that employment in public sector will have to be more transparent, that the fight against corruption,



At the same time, regulations in the area of minority rights and media freedoms will be harmonised.

Transparency Serbia has announced that the opening of chapters 23 and 24 can bring benefit to citizens, but that this depends on whether state bodies will make a step forward in the fight against corruption, and not only formally implement activities from the Action Plan, and on the EU’s determination to insist on results of the enforcement of laws.

The readiness to significantly modify the existing, as they said, incomplete and non-ambitious Action Plan, will be the first test of such determination.

According to their opinion, some problems in connection with corruption were not clearly recognised in EU analyses, nor have solutions for them been formulated within the European integration process.

As an example, they say that the EU screening report and the Action Plan for chapter 23 do not recognise as a problem conclusion of interstate agreements, which, according to Transparency, is one of main channels to avoid anti-corruption laws in Serbia.

“In this regard is the problem which is seen in the tendency of our state bodies to resolve as a priority the issues which are included in EU plans, at the expense of others which are not the subject of international monitoring,” says the Transparency.



particularly in health care sector, education, local self-government, customs, will have to be suppressed in a more efficient way.

The director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunovic, says that the opening of chapters 23 and 24 will accelerate the opening of all other chapters and the whole negotiation process, and that 80% of activities stipulated by the Action Plan have been implemented. Regarding minority rights, she says that this field is dealt with

by a special document as part of the Action Plan for chapter 23 and that this document was drafted in cooperation with national minorities.

The Most Important Thing Is to Implement Laws

The opening of the first chapters in the accession negotiations with the EU is the beginning of the process of harmonisation with EU norms of legislation. Ivan Bosnjak, the State Secretary in the Serbian Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government speaks for the **Minority NEWS** about the process which preceded the opening of chapters and which also concerns the national minorities living in Serbia.



- Based on the experience of past enlargements, the EU has concluded that the chapters pertaining to the judiciary and fundamental rights have great importance both because of internal safety of the EU and because of citizens of countries accessing the EU. What is the importance of the opening of the Chapter 23 when it comes to citizens of Serbia, that is, national minorities living here?

Citizens of the Republic of Serbia will

feel the importance of the opening of chapter 23 primarily through greater legal safety, better access to justice, efficiency and effectiveness of the judiciary, increased fight against corruption which will produce concrete results such as the creation of a better business environment, which together with more efficient work of judicial bodies affects the attraction of foreign and domestic investments, creation of new jobs and reduction of unemployment. From the point of view of national minorities, the open-

ing of the chapter will further improve the legislative framework, but will primarily affect the greater implementation of legal norms in this field, which will inevitably lead to the improvement and further development of bilateral relations with the countries of the region, particularly with those who are already members of the EU, which is very important for the negotiation process because of the support of these countries which is necessary during the negotiations with the EU.

-The opening of the chapters was preceded by the drafting of the Action Plan for the Realisation of National Minority Rights. Which obligations the public administration assumed by this Action Plan, and which obligations the National Councils assumed?

The accession to the EU is a strategic commitment of the Republic of Serbia, and in keeping with that commitment, the Government of the Republic of Serbia brought the Action Plan as part of the negotiation chapter 23 – judiciary and fundamental rights and the Action Plan for the Realisation of National Minority Rights on March 3, 2016.

The process of drafting the Action Plan for the Realisation of National Minority Rights was prepared through a wide inclusive framework and I want to stress that the Action Plan for the Realisation of National Minority Rights stipulates a great number of activities with a number of affirmative measures aimed at improving the status of national minorities, and they pertain primarily to the following fields: personal status position, ban on discrimination, culture and media, freedom of religion, the use of language and script, education, democratic participation, appropriate representation of national minorities in public sector, National Councils of National Minorities, economic position of national minorities and international cooperation.

Also, the National Minority Councils are supposed to be the main subjects or partners in the realisation of a number of activities carried out by state bodies, and partners in the monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan, with the aim of achieving a greater visibility of national minorities as an integral part of the Serbian society, and in the improvement of social integration as a whole.

- Has the implementation of the Action Plan for the Realisation of National Minority Rights already started?

The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government has started the realisation of activities from the Action Plan in its jurisdiction and activities where it is one of the participants or a partner.

The Council for National Minorities

has been entrusted with the monitoring of the realisation of activities from the Action Plan for the Realisation of National Minority Rights, by which full coordination between the state bodies and the greatest level of support to the implementation of the planned activities have been secured, as well as the full inclusion of national minorities in the monitoring process. The Council for National Minorities

The existing legislative framework in the field of protection of national minority rights in Serbia was assessed as good by the IC, but there are certain obstacles in its implementation

is a government's working body which is comprised of relevant state bodies and presidents of all National Councils for National Minorities.

- Did the implementation of the Action Plan for Chapter 23 commence when we started resolving the issues related to the action plan?

Activities from the Action Plan for Chapter 23 are being conducted. The Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Action Plan for chapter 23 at a session held on April 27, 2016. The council for implementation of the Action Plan for chapter 23 is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan for chapter 23, and it was established by the Government, at the proposal of the president of the negotiation group. Having in mind that the said Council is in charge of coordinating the reporting process, namely, that the Council, in cooperation with the European Integration Office, submits quarterly reports on the implementation of the Action Plan to the Coordinating Body for the Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the EU, the first report after the adoption of the Action Plan for Chapter 23 was prepared at the end of the second quarter of 2016. That is why the Council organised a meeting on July 1, 2016 in order to present the report No. 1-

2/2016 on the implementation of the Action Plan for Chapter 23, in which drafting representatives of all other institutions and state bodies in charge of implementing the activities took part, in addition to representatives of the Justice Ministry and the European Integration Office, as well as representatives of the civil society. According to Justice Minister Nikola Selakovic and the president of the negotiation group for Chapter 23, Cedomir Backovic, by July 1, 2016, 80% of the obligations from the Action Plan were met.

- What are the first specific steps that will be taken after the opening of the chapters?

Having in mind that the Republic of Serbia has opened Chapter 23 at the inter-governmental conference on July 18 in Brussels and that it has already started the implementation of the Action Plan for Chapter 23, the planned activities will be carried out in keeping with the dynamics stipulated by the Action Plan. Also, daily communication with representatives of the European Union Delegation to Serbia and representatives in Brussels will be continued, as well as with experts who will be sent occasionally by the EU to determine the current state of affairs and progress that has been made.

Regarding concrete steps, I stress that in addition to improving the existing legal solutions, their implementation is the most important thing. Having in mind the scope of operations carried out by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, these steps pertain to further building of an efficient, functional, professional, responsible, transparent, merit-based foundation of public administration, which, of course, includes local government units, and further protection of national minority rights through the existing institutions such the Council for National Minorities, relevant ministries, the Office for Human and Minority Rights, independent institutions, municipality and city administrations and judicial bodies.

- How will its implementation be monitored?

The Action Plan for Chapter 23 established a control mechanism as well. The responsibility for monitoring the implementation of activities from the Action Plan will be divided

between the Council for the Implementation of the Action Plan for Chapter 23, the Chief of the Negotiation Team for Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the EU, the Negotiation Team for Chapter 23 headed by the president/chief of the Negotiation Team for Chapter 23, the Coordinating Body for the Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the EU and the Council of the Coordinating Body. In a broader sense, the Republic of Serbia Parliament's European Integration Committee and the Serbian Parliament, as well as the European Commission, are coordination mechanisms.

The Council for the Implementation of the Action Plan for Negotiations on Chapter 23 is monitoring the implementation of activities from the Action Plan on a daily basis, is starting an early warning mechanism in case of a stalemate and other problems in the implementation of the Action Plan and is coordinating the reporting process. The Council submits monthly reports on the implementation of the Action Plan to the Chief of the Negotiation Team for Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the EU, the President of the Negotiation Group for Chapter 23 and the Council of the Coordinating Body. In cooperation with the European Integration Office, the Council submits quarterly reports on the implementation of the Action Plan to the Coordinating Body for Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the EU and the Serbian Parliament's European Integration Committee; it submits six-month reports to the European Commission and annual reports are published on the web page of the Ministry of Justice and a portal dedicated to the negotiations with the EU.

There is an early warning mechanism in case of a stalemate in the implementation of the Action Plan. In case it notices stalemates, delays or other problems in the implementation of the Action Plan, the Council can issue warnings and send them to the Chief of the Negotiation Team for Serbia's Accession to the EU, the President/chief of the Negotiation Group for Chapter 23 and the Council of the Coordinating Body, which may take measures depending on the problem and its jurisdiction. In case that there are still delays or problems, the Chief of the Negotiation Team for Serbia's Accession to the EU, the President/chief of the Negotiation Group and the Council of the

Coordinating Body will inform of this the Coordinating Body and the Serbian Parliament's European Integration Committee which will take measures within the scope of their jurisdiction. If despite all measures, the subjects who are responsible for the implementation of certain activities from the Action Plan do not act in keeping with the Action Plan, the coordinating body and Parliament can launch a procedure for determining their accountability in keeping with regulations dealing with the work of the said subjects.

One should not forget the most important control mechanism for the negotiation process, this being the control mechanism of the European Commission which submits annual reports on Serbia's progress in the European integration process, as well as frequent expert missions which make detailed reports on the state of affairs, progress and proposals on the ways to improve legal regulations and implement the existing and new legal solutions.

- In the case of Croatia, the most complex issues in the field of human rights protection pertained to protection of national minorities, that is, to their representation in state administration and judiciary. Can we say that the situation is the same here?

The existing legislative framework in the field of protection of national minority rights in the Republic of Serbia was assessed as good by the IC, but there are certain obstacles in the implementation and this is why the Action Plan for the Realisation of Rights of National Minorities is focused on the implementation of the existing legal framework and on its further improvement.

In keeping with this, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government established the following task forces with the aim of amending certain laws: a special task force for making a draft bill amending and supplementing the law on the protection of rights and freedoms of national minorities, a special task force for drafting a law on national councils of national minorities and a special task force for drafting a comparative legal analysis of democratic participation of national minorities in EU member states in the region.

Representatives of the national councils of national minorities are in-

cluded in the work of these task forces.

Working version of a bill amending the law on the protection of the rights and freedoms of national minorities and the law on national councils of national minorities are being prepared.

The task force for drafting a comparative legal analysis of democratic participation of national minorities in EU member states in the region prepared a draft analysis and forwarded it to all national councils of national minorities having in mind that the Action Plan designated the national councils as partners in the realisation of these activities. The task force for drafting a comparative legal analysis focused on identifying the best practices of the EU member states in the region with the aim of finding appropriate model of participation of national minorities in the election process and their appropriate representation at the republic, provincial and local level. The text of the comparative legal analysis has been prepared by representatives of the Justice Ministry, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government and the Republic of Serbia Secretariat for Legislation and by experts. The document will be forwarded to Serbian Parliament's task force for amending the political system.

Also, the law on employees in autonomous provinces and local government units, which the Serbian Parliament adopted on March 3, 2016, stipulates that a by-law will be adopted which will stipulate that the knowledge of a language of a national minority which is in use in the territory of a local self-government will be a special requirement for certain civil servants jobs. Citizens would thus exercise their right to the official use of languages and scripts of national minorities in oral and written communication with bodies of the autonomous provinces and local government units.

The Republic of Serbia expects that it will manage to preserve the achieved level of rights of national minorities in the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia through the Croatian-Serbian dialogue and that it will improve the position of national minorities in Serbia through better implementation of the legislative framework.

Paunovic: Committed to monitoring the Action Plan for Minorities

After a meeting with the chief of the negotiation team for Serbia's accession negotiations with the EU, representatives of state bodies, international organisations and the EU Delegation to Serbia and the Office for Human and Minority Rights held meetings with representatives of the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities and with representatives of the Councils of National Minorities.

The Office for Human and Minority Rights, in cooperation with the EU-funded twinning „Support to Improving Human Rights and Zero Tolerance to Discrimination ” prepared a methodology for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Action Plan for the Realisation of National Minority Rights, which it today presented to participants of the meeting. By adopting the Action Plan for Realisation of National Minority Rights, the Republic of Serbia has rounded off its strategic commitment to improving the institutional and legislative framework in the field of human and minority rights and freedoms, said the director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Dr Suzana Paunovic.

Public Call for Applications for Grants from IPA 2013

The Finance Ministry, the Sector for Contracting and Financing Programmes from EU Funds has issued a public call for applications for grants from IPA 2013 for implementation of activities pertaining to the improvement of living conditions in sub-standard Roma settlements.

Funds amount to 9.5 million euros, and the call is open until September 9, 2016.

Call is open for all municipalities in Serbia.



The Action Plan for Realisation of National Minority Rights, which was adopted on March 3, 2016, stipulates that the Council for National Minorities shall monitor the implementation of activities from the Action Plan.

The Office for Human and Minority Rights is providing expert and administrative-technical support to the Council and is obliged to quarterly collect data on the implementation of activities and make reports on the implementation of the Action Plan. The Office for Human and Minority Rights will forward reports on the implementation of the Action Plan to the Council of National Minorities and the Coordination of National Councils of National Minorities. Reports will also be forwarded to the council for the implementation of the Action Plan for negotiation chapter 23 with the aim of monitoring the implementation of the Action plan for negotiation chapter 23.

Paunovic stressed that the Government is committed to monitoring the Action Plan for Minorities and that a team will be formed which will collect data and make reports. Training is also planned for persons who will make reports on the implementation of activities from the Action Plan and forward data to the Office for Human and Minority Rights.

It is in everyone's interest that the Office's reporting be as efficient as possible and that it contributes to as complete as possible a picture of activities pertaining to the Plan, Paunovic has said.



Joint Problems and Decisions

Source: Ruske Slovo/Madar so

The Coordination of National Councils of National Minorities was in session in Novi Pazar on July 1. On behalf of the Chair of the Council, the Bosniak National Council, the session was presided over by the president of the Bosniak National Council, Sulejman Ugljanin.

The participants concluded that the greatest number of problems exist in education. Because of this they plan to visit the Ministry of Education upon the formation of a new Government.

The participants of the meeting also reviewed problems in connection with implementation of laws. Dr Ugljanin said that laws pertaining to national minorities/national councils were inapplicable. "In the coming period we will form teams of experts who will bring all the issues together and we will try to find a way for the minorities in Serbia can start realising their rights. We decided to ask the Serbian Government to adopt a regulation which will stipulate sanctions for all those who do not abide by the law. This will be in the interest of all minorities and in the interest of the state on its European path," Ugljanin has said.

The president of the National Council of Hungarians, Jene Hejnal, said that they had been talking about the fate of the law on national councils, and about current tasks related to the minority action plan.

"At this point, it would be meaningful to speak about talks held in the Office for

Human and Minority Rights. We spoke about methodological solutions used in making reports on minority action plan. Most of the national councils are facing the fact that serious tasks are ahead of us. Every national council has its tasks in connection with the Action Plan. This job cannot wait regardless of the fact that the Government has not yet been formed. Tasks must be fulfilled; everyone must work on their tasks. First reports should be completed by the end of August. The issue of education was on the agenda of the Coordinating Body of National Councils since this is one of the most important and most serious subjects concerning the national minorities. We formulated our requests and expectations in connection with several subjects concerning education without the Government and the Ministry of Education and when we are offered an opportunity, we will sit at the table to formulate our ideas with those who are responsible. There are a number of such issues, from classes with less than 15 students to the so-called approved financial frameworks for elementary and secondary schools. When it comes to these issues, all national councils were united in a position that everyone must support classes with a small number of

students, even if such classes have only one student. If we are not capable of realising our most fundamental rights, we cannot speak of a single education system or about the realisation of national rights. We agreed to form in the future various groups of experts for various fields which would start operations immediately. One of the most important tasks is as thorough as possible amendment to the law on national councils which should be adopted as soon as possible. Drafting a new law would be good from our point of view," Hajnal has said.

Of course, there was word of the financing of the national councils. The Coordination will ask the Serbian Government to allocate 0.05% of the state budget next year for the financing of the national councils. Also, it will ask the provincial government to allocate 0.05% of the provincial budget for this purpose. The law on national minorities stipulated a budget fund for national councils at the state level, but this fund has not yet come to life. The Coordination will demand that the planned 0.05% of the state budget be allocated to the Fund in order to finance and co-finance projects in the jurisdiction of the national councils.

It was said once again that the national councils will formalise and legally institutionalise their status so that they could apply for domestic and international funds;



“Under the Tree Tops on the Strand” event

Learning Minority Languages on the Beach

Photograph by: Heror Media Pont

In the second week of July, the event called “under the tree-tops on the Strand” event started on the Novi Sad beach Strand the aim of which is to present national communities in the Vojvodina.

Organised by the Novi Sad City Library, Heror Media Pont and the Centre for Development of Minority and Local Media, this event has been held for the fourth year in a row. It will last till August 20.

will be marked by workshops of Hungarian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Romanian and Slovenian languages. Workshops are being attended by children aged 5-12 and they are being held every day. Knowledge is checked on Saturdays.

For the first time, the Slovenian language was included in the programme. As the creator of this event, Natasa Heror, told us, the Slovenian language was included because some Novi Sad elementary schools plan to introduce Slovenian in their curricula.

“We learned from the Slovenian society ‘Kredarica’ that certain elementary schools in Novi Sad plan to introduce Slovenian as elective subject into their curricula and hence the inclusion of Slovenian in the programme of the “under the tree tops on the Strand” event. The participation in language workshops dealing with minority languages encourages children to opt for classes of Hungarian, Slovak or Ruthenian as elective classes, which is possible in Novi Sad schools. The experience of children who attended our language workshops confirm these claims since they gained knowledge through play which



many had an opportunity to use,” Natasa Heror has said.

The organisers provided free daily and weekly papers in languages of national minorities for older visitors of the event.



The first week was marked by Olympics and many distinguished athletes were the guests of the event. The remaining weeks



High School Students Attending a Serbian Language Course Organised by the Hungarian National Council (HNC)

Source: Vajma info



Some 70 third-year high school students from the whole of the Vojvodina attended a three-week Serbian language course organised by the Hungarian National Council. This time the focus was on communication since the experience showed that young Vojvodina Hungarians have only a passive knowledge of Serbian.

In the first two weeks, the course was held in Kanjiza, Backa Topola, Temerin, Becej, Ada, Senta and Subotica, and it was held in Novi Sad in the last week.

There were 40 classes a week during the first part of the course. The second part of the course was more intensive and participants were learning Serbian eight hours a day. There is great interest in this training

which is useful for enrolments in universities. The course is being attended by students who previously attended Serbian language classes organised by the Hungarian National Council and who reached a certain level, and in this phase they are encouraged to reinforce their knowledge and freely speak Serbian.

On behalf of the HNC, the participants were

welcomed by Aniko Jeras, the president of the Executive Board. She said that one of the goals of the course is for the participants to get acquainted with Novi Sad and Evropa student dormitory, as well as to encourage them to enrol in universities in Novi Sad after they graduate from their high schools.

Upon the completion of the course, every participant got a certificate signed by the president of the HNC, and in addition to usual Serbian language classes, the participants watched various films, took part in sports activities and paid a visit to the student campus, Radio Novi Sad and the Forum publishing.

Lavender Days in Subotica

Source: Panon

Organised by the women section of the Alliance of the Vojvodina Hungarians, a humanitarian event called Lavender Days was held in Zeljeznicko Naselje. Proceeds from the event will be used for the purchase of school supplies.

A fair was also held where visitors could buy various lavender handicrafts, cut lavender flowers, lavender soaps and gastronomic lavender products.



The women's section of the Alliance of the Vojvodina Hungarians has organised the event for the third time. The president of the women's section of the Alliance of the Vojvodina Hungarians, Beata Bogнар, has said: "In addition to presenting the beauty of lavender, we feel that it is very important for this event to be humanitarian in nature. We will purchase school supplies to children in need."

Packages will be distributed before the commencement of the school year, at the end of August, to children who live in the territory of this local community.

Horsemen in Krstur

Source: Ruske Slovo/Madar so



An equestrian expedition which set off from Hungary stayed in the Vojvodina for a while. Its final destination is Azerbaijan, that is, Baku.

Two members of the equestrian expedition called "Along the Historic Silk Road on Horseback," Istvan Bencze and Farkasa Chemes, set off from the Hevesh County on July 4. After four days, they crossed the Serbian border and visited several Vojvodina places, including Krstur.

The historic equestrian expedition set off from the place where Attila was allegedly buried. The Silk Road, which is long a total of 15,000 km, is divided into three sections: they will cross the first section this year – the expedition will cross Serbia, Bulgaria, partly Turkey, in almost three months. They will cross the Black Sea by ship after which they will cross Georgia and Azerbaijan on horseback. The final destination is Baku. The second section will be crossed in 2017 when they will go on horseback along the historic Silk Road across Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, to Kazakhstan. The third section will be crossed in 2018 when they will travel Mongolia and China, all the way to South Korea on horseback.



In Krstur, they were welcomed by members of the Ruthenian equestrian club, young members of sections of the Ruski Krstur Cultural Home dressed in national costumes. They visited a museum exhibition in the Castle, and a cathedral church. Before leaving Ruski Krstur, they and Krstur parish priest Mihajlo Malacki left miraculous medals in the centre of the village.

Three medals – symbols of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit were put on the cross in the centre of the village and in several places in the centre.

In addition to spreading peace, the pilgrims are collecting signatures in support of building a chapel in Komloska in Hungary, where Ruthenians live.

Whip Cracking – Skill and Attraction

Source: Hrvatska rijec



Some 30 participants took part in a whip cracking competition in the second half of July at the farm of Vlatko Vojnic Purcar in Djurdjin. This event has been included in the calendar of the Duzijnce event for the second year in a row.



Dragomir Peic Gavran was the winner in the senior category in single swing whip cracking, and Tomica Mesaros was the winner in double swing whip cracking. The victory for the loudest whip cracking was claimed by Grgo Tikvicki.

The event was included in the programme of the Duzijnce event at the initiative of Ivan Piukovic. There was a

Many, who came there only to watch, tried whip cracking on a pleasant afternoon sun on Vlatko's farm. Whips, short or long, heavy or light, made only of leather or of other materials. Does the skill of whip cracking depend on the quality of the material of the whip or of the technique?

A good whip can be bought at fairs for some 3,000 dinars.

One can whip crack by one hand with a single or a double swing. Also, some can whip crack with both hands and by a double swing, which is the highest skill.

Competitors were divided into groups according to age of whip crack technique, single or double swing.

The youngest competitor was David Sarcevic, and the winner in the junior category was Krunoslav Pukovic.

desire to renew the skill and teach younger generations the whip cracking.



RTV “Stara Pazova”: A Smaller Number of Employees Maintain the Quality of Programme In Slovak

Source: UNS

RTV Stara Pazova which was sold in August last year to MR&Co d.o.o. of Belgrade broadcast programme in Slovak.

It continued to broadcast such programme after the privatisation. TV news and information and entertainment programme in Slovak are still part of daily programme scheme, but they are now produced by a smaller number of employees.

- Instead of six people, there are now



five people in the editorial office, and they are overburdened since the same job is being done by fewer employees. The programme quota for minority languages must remain unchanged for at least five years, but many media outlets only let music play to abide by the form. It seems to me that we are an exception since we are endeavour-

ing to maintain the same quality or to improve it, Milos Lazic, the director of this media outlet said.

He said that the Ministry of Culture supported their media project for Slovak language with 500,000 dinars.

In a competition called by Stara Pazova Municipality, media which produce content in minority languages had an advantage. RTV Stara Pazova met this condition and got 15 million dinars from the municipality for a project called “goods news for Pazova.”

Great Success of Slovak Actors in Trebinje

Source: Hlas Ljudu



PThe play called Ad Infinitum performed by the Slovak VHV Theatre of the Slovak Cultural and Artistic Society Heroj Janko Cmelik of Stara Pazova was declared the best play at the 59th Festival of Festivals in Trebinje. The play was awarded the Golden Masques awards for the best play and for the best stage area designed by Miroslav Kozik, for the best costumes designed by Ivana Bako and for the best music authored by

Miroslav Bako.

Authors M. Kozik and M. Bako repeated the success of three years ago when they were awarded with five Golden Masks for the Vavilon play.

The festival of theatre amateurs was held from July 21 to July 27 and visitors had an opportunity to see



best plays from Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“We are very happy because of so many awards. We did not expect so many awards, but we wished them,” director Miroslav Kozik has said.

Medal of Merit for Macedonia to the President of the Macedonian National Council

Source: Komsijske Novosti

N At a ceremony in Ohrid, the president of the Republic of Macedonia, Djordje Ivanov, has decorated four Macedonians from the Diaspora for their personal contribution to promoting the Macedonian identity, culture and language. Among them was the president of the Macedonian National Council, Borce Velickovski, who proudly received the medal as an incentive for further work.



posed of the president of the state and 14 members.

“You all are Macedonia’s living ties with the world. You, successful individuals and organisations in the Diaspora. You are our ambassadors in the fields of culture, education, science,” said Macedonian President Djordje Ivanov.

This medal is one of eight most important decorations in Macedonia awarded by the President of the Republic of Macedonia.

Such decorations are awarded at the proposal of the Decorations Committee as a standing working body of the president of Macedonia com-

posed of the president of the state and 14 members. In 2013, the National Council of the Macedonian National Minority was awarded with the Charter of the Republic of Macedonia.

The Roma Community

Reception for Best Students

Source: Komsijske Novosti

U The Pancevo Mayor organised a reception in the second half of July for Roma students who finished the school year with B and A scores.

This year, 185 Roma students finished the school year with A or B scores – 157 of them are elementary school students and 28 are secondary school students.

Pancevo Mayor Sasa Pavlov, and Milenko Cuckovic, a member of the City Council for Labour, Employment and Social Policy, addressed the students and their parents.

Students also got a one-time monetary aid in the amount of 4,000 dinars.

The City of Pancevo Action Plan for Roma Integration secured 750,000 dinars for the purpose.



The Mayor congratulated the students on their results, praised their diligence and approach to their school obligations, saying that they should continue to nurture these qualities which are important during education but also in life, wishing that they continue with their successes.

The Sombor Bunjevac Duzijanica 2016

Source: www.bunjevci.net



The Sombor Bunjevac Duzijanica, a harvesting ceremony, was held for the 16th time in Sombor on July 24.

A column headed by horsemen, followed by Bunjevac women who held grains as a symbol of the ceremony, took to the streets of the town. There were more than 20 carriages with people in festive national costumes and guests. A pedestrian column of guests slowly moved behind them on their way to the local church.

A holy mass where new wheat and bread were blessed was held in the St. Trinity Church. A dance was played at the St. George Square and then a solemn column set off for the municipal building.

Sonja Krstic and Ivan Fratric took the blessed bread to

the municipal building where they handed it over to the Sombor Mayor, Dusanka Golubovic.

The event was attended by numerous guests from Bunjevac institutions and NSBNM from Subotica, guests from Novi Sad, Svetozar Miletic, Belgrade and Hungary, who were welcomed by the president of the Bunjevacko Kolo, Dejan Parcetic.

Dr. Nebojsa Kuzmanovic of the Vojvodina Secretariat for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities attended the Sombor Bunjevac Duzionica event.

Members of a Radio-TV Vojvodina crew headed by the author of the Petkazanje show, Boro Otic, were particularly dear guests. Bunjevac customs and tradition will be their inspiration for future shows.



Fifth edition of the Book “Basic Terms of Jewish Customs and Religion

Source: Komsijske Novosti

U The 5th edition of a book by Pavle Shosberger titled “Basic Terms of Jewish Customs and Religion” has been printed. The book is suitable for basic education, and readers have an opportunity to get ac-

quainted with basic terms of Jewish customs and religion.

It can serve as a handbook for all those who know little or nothing about Judaistic, not aspiring to offer a more thorough knowledge about

the Jewish religion, customs and terms. The content includes: religion, rites, blessings, holidays, food, Talmud, religious groups, symbols, Tanah (Bible), and life cycles – marriage, bat mitzvah, bar mitzvah, funeral...

The Bulgarian Community

The First Issue of the Novo Bratstvo Bi-Weekly Printed

Source: Komsijske Novosti

P After much uncertainty, the small editorial office in Nis was happy to see the new weekly to be printed almost four years after the previous Bratstvo newspaper and the children newspaper, Dragce, were shut down due to financial problems. Seven journalists, who were left jobless, will again inform Bulgarian nationals in Serbia about events important for their community. They will be able to read about the current subjects, cultural and sports events, and one page will be dedicated to literature in Bulgarian.

The newspapers' editor Mila Vasov says that the newspaper will primarily deal with information and events in Bosilegrad and Dimitrovgrad, but also with activities of the National Council of the Bulgarian National Minority, and particular attention will be paid to the language, culture, education and Bulgarian tradition.

“Bratstvo” was distributed to Dimitrovgrad and Bosilegrad municipalities, and later it will be distributed to all places where members of the Bulgarian national minority live.



Some 6.3 million dinars has been provided for starting the newspaper and it will be printed twice a month on 12 pages.

The National Council of the Bulgarian National Minority made savings in the budget and thus enabled the starting of the newspaper and its work until the end of the year. The Council also plans to start children's newspaper in Bulgarian, Novo Drugare.

Projects and cooperation improved programme in Bulgarian

Izvor: Komšijske novosti

R Radio-television Caribrod (RTC) of Dimitrovgrad was sold in August last year to businessman Radoica Milosavljevic. Since it was founded the RTC has broadcast programme in Bulgarian.

According to director Miroslav Nackov, the scope and quality of programmes increased after the privatisation.

“Now we have more daily reports in Bulgarian from our and Bulgarian national television. We have recently signed a co-operation agreement with this public broadcaster which includes exchange of programmes and equipment, education of cadres and joint projects,” Nackov told Komsijske Novosti.

“The historic personality of Caribrod” radio programme of RTC was supported with more than 450,000 dinars at a competition of the Ministry of Culture and Information for co-financing media projects in languages of national minorities.

Dimitrovgrad Municipality has allocated some 10 million dinars to this media outlet for a TV project in a minority language, and a radio project in Serbia and Bulgarian received more than 2 million dinars.



Centar za istraživanja migracija
Center for Migration Studies

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