

**“Gender Equality in the Work
of National Councils
of National Minorities”
Seminar Held**

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Day of the Missing: In Kosovo
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HIGHLIGHTS



Possibility of Opening Four More Chapters by the End of the Year

Chairwoman of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration, Marinika Tepić, expressed her hope that "in accordance with a realistic view of the moment and the situation, during the Slovak Republic's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Chapters 5, 20, 25 and 26 will also be opened, of which the last two could be closed very expeditiously".



Vlachs Are not an Obstacle for the Accession to the EU

Former President of Romania, Traian Basescu, previously stated that the official Bucharest could veto Serbia's accession to the European Union, if Serbia fails to respect fully the Bilateral Agreement on the Protection of the Rights of the Romanian Minority. Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, said that, in the recent years, a lot has been done to improve the position of national minorities, as well as Romanian and Vlach, and added that she did not want to comment any "statements by representatives of political parties from other countries", including the statement of former President Traian Basescu, which she noted is probably more aimed at the internal political use.



55th Slovak Folk Festival Held

Slovak Folk Festival was held in Bački Petrovac for the 55th time. This year, the festival of Slovaks in Serbia once again gathered a great number of members of the Slovak national minority, as well as government officials from our country and the Slovak Republic.

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Good Relations Stronger than Tension

History has a funny habit – it often likes to repeat itself. It especially likes to repeat its not-so-bright sides. This year, shortly before the anniversary of the military operation "Oluja" (Storm) sparks between Belgrade and Zagreb were ignited once again. While some mourned, others celebrated. Some lighted candles while others organized concerts. Traditionally opposing attitudes about the operation "Oluja" were expressed by a number of statements from politicians on both sides, leading to recurrence of war rhetoric.

While the beginning of August was partly marked by the exchange of harsh words between Serbian and Croatian politicians, the middle of the month in Kosovo was marked by the announcement of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. Revitalization of the bridge over the Ibar River that connects the northern (Serbian) and the southern (Albanian) part of Kosovska Mitrovica should contribute to the normalization. Optimistic announcement was made by all three parties involved in the dialogue - the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, the Kosovo Government and the European Union.

It is a well-known saying that bridges connect people and coasts. Will the bridge in Kosovska Mitrovica confirm this saying, and contribute to the improvement of previously severed relations between communities that live there, only time will show. Let us believe in the best possible outcomes.

30 different national minorities live in Serbia



and ONE newsletter for all

International Day of the Missing

Source: Tanjug

Protest rally on 30 August in Gračanica marked the International Day of the Missing, and the families of Serbian and other non-Albanian victims, this year once again asked the competent authorities to clarify the fate of missing persons during the conflict in Kosovo.

Protest, which was organized in the center of Gračanica, was attended by around hundred people carrying signs that were plastered with pictures of missing Serbs and other non-Albanians during the war, reported Radio KIM.

The coordinator of the Association of Missing Persons in Kosovo and Metohija, Milorad Trifunović, said that for the last five years there has been no digging on any of the sites where the bodies of killed Serbs and non-Albanians are believed to have been buried.

“Executioners of our innocent victims today lay wreaths on their graves and insult the memory of them, which is all we have left. What else is there left for us but to get together and mark these gloomy international days, instead of their birthdays and marriages”, said Trifunović.

In Kosovo, according to the June 2015 data, a total of 1,654 persons are still listed as missing, including more than 530 Serbs and other non-Albanians.

Representative of the Association of Kidnapped and Missing Persons, Silvana Marinković, said that although the kidnappers and the circumstances under which the people disappeared are known, no one is doing anything about it.

“My husband disappeared on June 19, 1999. There is evidence of when and where he was kidnapped, but those responsible have not yet been brought to justice, instead they were rewarded. Many of them work in Kosovo institutions. One of them works at the police station in Gračanica”, said Marinković, not wanting to reveal the name of the police officer she was talking about.

Protest rally was also attended by representatives of the Serbian and Kosovo institutions.

Kosovo Deputy Prime Minister, Branimir Stojanović, said that the issue of missing and kidnapped persons is often subject to politicization.

“It is very important that all political decision makers understand that until this is solved, until the issue of the kidnapped and missing persons gets its epilogue, there is no genuine agreement, or building the future on the basis

was announced by that organization on the occasion of the International Day of the Disappeared.

As it was stated in the announcement on the occasion, the International Day of the Disappeared is important in order to raise awareness of the government, the media and the general public in the world, about the fate of the missing persons and their families.

This very sensitive issue, which affects thousands of people, is of paramount importance in Kosovo and also for EULEX, it was stated in the announcement of that organization.



of mutual respect, tolerance and coexistence”, said Stojanović.

MISSING PERSONS ISSUE IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE FOR EULEX AS WELL

Since December 2008, the remains of 491 victims of the Kosovo conflict have been handed over, more than 2,000 DNA analysis have been conducted, and EULEX will continue to work in order to solve the fate of the missing persons as soon as possible, it

EULEX assists the Institute of Forensic Medicine (ISM) of the Ministry of Justice of Kosovo in intensive efforts to clarify the fate of missing persons and intensively coordinates activities with family associations, individual families and with other interested parties.

Since EULEX began cooperation with the Institute of Forensic Medicine in December 2008, the remains of 491 victims of the conflict were handed over to their families.

This includes 387 new identifications of missing persons that were found after intensive field work (in over 554 field operations), laboratory analysis (intensive work on the autopsy and identification, which includes over 2,100 DNA bone samples submitted for analysis), as well as archival case reviews.

The Institute of Forensic Medicine will continue to work within its mandate with the support of experts from EULEX, in order to solve the fate of missing persons as soon as possible.



Reforms Require the Participation of All Citizens



apters 23 and 24 have been opened. We have before us set of planned activities, which we have to implement as efficiently as possible. We talked with Čedomir Backović, Head of the Negotiating Team for Chapter 23, about a series of reforms, as well as about other issues that will be opened on the European path of our country.

We often hear that we have before us a number of activities under the Action Plan for Chapter 23, still the general public knows very little about what this really means. Can you explain what those activities are, or what reforms will be implemented and within what time frame?

I can try. Action Plan for Chapter 23 has 412 pages. It is a very professional, expertly drafted document that deals with a very specific, professional issues in three areas. One of the areas is judiciary, the second area is the fight against corruption, and the third area is the protection of citizens' rights, the so-called fundamental rights. And within these 412 pages there are many activities planned, 54 institutions in the state of Serbia, the most diverse ministries, offices that by implementation of these activities that are intentional, planned in accordance with the European Union, outlined, need to achieve results that will translate into some concrete benefits, advancements, improvements of the lives of the citizens of Serbia in these three forms. We can give some examples. When it comes to judiciary, if all the activities are carried out, it is reasonable to assume that the state of the judiciary will improve in a number of very important things. Then, the second element, which is supposed to be very important, is to increase efficiency. Efficiency means that people receive the court's decision in a dispute within a reasonable time. Whether these are property disputes, or criminal proceedings, they need to be resolved within a reasonable time. The next moment, which is very important, is that there needs to be a necessary degree of predictability. What does that actually mean? This means that a male or a female citizen of Serbia should be in a situation where he or she can fairly reasonably predict the outcome of a dispute. What does this mean? This does not mean that if you are filing a lawsuit that it is something analogous to buying a lottery ticket, where you need to guess whether you will win the lottery or not. No, it means that before you file a lawsuit, the judicial system

needs to be established in a way so that the legal consequences of acts or omissions of citizens are known to a great extent. Progress is especially needed in property law and in civil law, but also in criminal law which plays a certain role in this. In order to ensure all this, it is necessary to implement a series of activities that lead to it. For example, one very important activity, in order to measure the effects and the quality of work of judicial bodies, is the so-

participate, improve, and correct our behavior in the civilization, European sense, etc. This is as far as the judiciary is concerned.

We can talk about the second topic. It is the fight against corruption. And it is very important for the citizens. It is generally divided into two parts. One part is the prevention, and the other is repression. Prevention in the field of fight against



called computerization. This means a much greater introduction of computers in the entire process of judicial decision-making. On the other hand, in order to achieve this, it is necessary that all judicial activists participate in this. There is a thing called procedural discipline. Procedural discipline in the judiciary is also something that we need to improve, and the reason for this is that by the very nature of things, in every dispute, criminal or civil, there is almost always one side that has an interest for a dispute to never end. Procedural discipline exists so that a dispute would still end within a certain timeframe. And now it is up to the courts, the parties to the dispute and the lawyers. So when we talk about judiciary in Chapter 23, we must still have one main message, which is, in order to achieve the objectives of Chapter 23 it is necessary that we all, absolutely all the citizens of Serbia,

corruption should, through its activities, result in identifying and determining the points in the country, in public administration and in government in general and in various public companies, in the ministries, the agencies, the departments, and other structures, in schools, in health care; points that, by the very nature of work, are exposed to corrupt practices and to then implement preventive measures against corruption in relation to those points in order to prevent the appearance of corruption, in contrast to the repression. For example, computerization is a big help in preventive measures. This means that if you have proper computer-based records of anything, then these records make it possible to prevent decision-making by jumping the queue, to prevent inconsistencies in decision-making etc. Or you have a situation where discretion given to a decision-maker

needs be limited in a reasonable way. The greater the discretion, the greater the corruption and so on. So these are the preventive measures. We also have conflicting interests, asset declarations for public officials in order to prevent corruption, a whole range of activities that should lead to the reduction of corruption in the preventive part, and in the repressive part they should lead to a better and more efficient prosecution of corruption by the prosecutor's office, police, and the court. In this sense, we have already achieved some changes in the legal norms and in the judicial prosecutorial network.

The third group includes fundamental rights, the rights of citizens. This is a very broad group. It deals with the right to information and the rights of national minorities and the so-called procedural rights in any relation with the state or with the court. These are the rights of children, the rights of certain categories of citizens such as the "LGBT community", in which we also anticipated very clear steps and actions in order to improve the situation so that no one has to bear any negative consequences due to their diversity on any of the plans of the State's conduct on one hand, and on the other hand to identify the groups that are more susceptible to discrimination, which are by their very nature more prone to some kind of negative consequences of belonging to a given group, whether they are children, whether they are victims of domestic violence, whether they are national minorities, whether they are a minority in relation to the other; in that sense a range of activities need to be undertaken in order to achieve concrete improvements in the daily lives of members of these different groups, as well as all citizens of Serbia in some other spheres. The procedure for passing the law on free legal aid for people who are unable to hire a lawyer is currently in motion. The state wants to enable them to access justice, to prove and display some of their rights before the court. A very broad story that, to summarize, boils down to "all for all". It is necessary that all participate, all citizens, everyone in his or her own way needs to participate in the changes, in the reforms so that in the end it is better for everyone. And in such case, we cannot observe only one category of profession in Serbia. Our judiciary is the same as our healthcare. Our healthcare is the same as our schooling, our schooling is the same as our media, etc. We are the way we are, and we must all together slowly develop in the direction of a competent European country, where citizens live in such a way.

When these reforms are implemented, in what way will the citizens of Serbia feel them?

You will feel them very specifically. If we talk about judiciary, by having an arising dispute resolved much faster, much more efficiently, after having also resolved its enforcement, which is a litigation proceeding of the execution, it will be resolved much better. And by reinforcing predictability, there will be less disputes. If people can predict the specific consequences of their actions, then they will often behave in a way so that court disputes do not even occur. Second, people who are unable to afford to finance their appearance in court will have such a possibility, while children

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and victims will have special protection in court. The judiciary would approach a European level, and the citizens would be able to feel this in their regular life, if we talk about the judiciary.

If we talk about the fight against corruption, there will be fewer situations where you have to give someone a hundred euros to get something done. The assumption and the desire is for the things to get done without one, two, three or five hundred euros.

If we talk about the rights of national minorities, they will have better schooling. This means textbooks in their language, teaching in their own language, the appropriate approach to elementary, secondary, and university education, entrance exams in minority languages at universities, etc. Consequence is present and it will remain present in terms of improving the position of national minorities in the media. That is a completely different story, where we find ourselves between two very important principles, one is that the state needs to get out of the ownership of the media, and the other is that the state should enable the media of national minorities to function. This is a bit contradictory when you look at it, but there is also a solution. It is necessary to mature, to be honest with oneself. It is

necessary to distinguish between the legitimate interests of any group, whether national minorities, whether asylum seekers, whether ecological. So legitimate interests that are important to the state on one side and our good old Serbian employment of all citizens of Serbia, on the other. Employment is employment, while the effective and real way to achieve goals is something else. Here you also have somewhat opposing attitudes. Is the interest of children protected if we found employment for X number of people to deal with children's issues or is the interest of children protected if through the project system of financing we enabled the projects, with all their characteristics of control of the implementation and the achievement of the results, to be used as a way to finance concrete things that will produce concrete results. What does that mean? I think that the answer is evident, but again by nature we have our historical background, historical development that caused us to be the way we are. We will have to change that. This is what Chapter 23 involves, that we have to change.

And what are the deadlines envisaged for the implementation of these reforms?

If you take the Action Plan, you will see that it contains a series of columns. One column tells you what a concrete action is. This particular activity, for example, may be training of lawyers in local self-government units to deal with the system and the organization of providing free legal aid to citizens. In the second column it says whose responsibility it is - Ministry of Justice in cooperation with local self-governments in a single coordination. The third explains when this will happen. This will happen in the course of the year 2017. We are not going to pass the law and immediately put into use if we are not ready for its preparation. Then it says who will pay for it. In this particular case, we have foreign donors, and we have reserved funds in the budget of Serbia. It is all written in the Action Plan. And Action Plan was written by people so that other people would read it. We have to be more and more thorough and less superficial. It is also part of the European Union accession. Therefore, less superficiality, and more thoroughness. Thoroughness is when you take an action plan and read it. Superficiality is when you heard that it exists, and you have no idea what it was, but still have an attitude. These are the differences toward which we must strive. And the last column of the Action Plan states how the performance of individual activities will be monitored.

Minority communities themselves, or their national councils also have an active role in the implementation of the Action Plan.

We are pleased to see that the initial disagreements in connection with the Action Plan have been successfully overcome. In what part of the implementation of the Action Plan will national minorities, or their national councils play an active role?

I have to start from the beginning. What is democracy, what is a modern democratic society? It is a society which recognizes the legitimacy and the necessity of the existence of different interests, different groups in a society. Democracy also includes balancing the legitimate interests of the various groups that make up society. If we apply all this to the position of national minorities, then we have a situation where there are

26 of them in Serbia thus far, with a tendency of increase due to the method of determining the existence of national minorities that have their absolutely legitimate democratic interests. But these interests are mutually conflicting. For example size, the number of members of national minorities. What corresponds to a national minority with a large number, may not correspond to the national minority with a small number, it could

even be the opposite. What corresponds to a national minority that is homogeneous in terms of housing, may not be what corresponds to a national minority that is spread across Serbia, etc. To achieve single-mindedness in all this, or consent is neither possible nor advisable nor democratic. We have to balance all the competing interests case-by-case on the basis of principles, and not only the European acquis, but also the European practice and the -called European principles of functioning, which we are very familiar with in the development of the Action Plan for Chapter 23, where we really showed Europe and to the people in Serbia who can and want to understand what this is all about, that we are up to the task, and that in this sense we fully understand those finest nuances in terms of finding solutions that are no longer black and white, but they are very nuanced solutions that need to be found to reconcile all these interests we are talking about. We have experts in the European Union who came to us, the experts of the Council of Europe, who have a very specific relationship to the national councils and the possibility of their politicization. It is contained in the expert report. When it comes to national councils, on the one hand we have to find a balance, a middle ground between

the needs of a representative body, representative institution of a national minority, and on the other hand to prevent the politicization that would in some way lead to the exclusion of protecting the interests of those members of that national minority who either did not participate in the winning political line or those who do not want to take part in any politicization, but seek the realization of their conditions.

National minorities are also divided on the basis of whether or not they have their home country. Those that have, have one type of interests, and those that do not, have other interests. For example, it is logical and legitimate that one home country,



say a neighboring one, has no interest in having all members of national minorities in Serbia to go to study in that country and stay there. On the contrary, they have an interest for people to complete universities in Serbia and to remain in Serbia in order to prevent the disappearance or reduction of that national minority on a particular territory. This again raises the question whether it is necessary to have completely separate elementary schools and teaching that is completely in the minority language or to have mixed schools where the Serbian language is very present, because out of sheer inertia, if you have elementary and secondary schools in the minority language, then it means going to university in that country, which by inertia means that all university-educated people, members of certain national minorities, will live in their home country, and will not remain to live in Serbia, for example.

What distinguishes our Action Plan and what will in any case be a significant reason for our success in its implementation, not only for the sake of European Union, but also for our own sake, is, first, that it is inclusive, that in its drafting and implementation involved all interested parties 99%; second, that it was made in a highly skilled,

professional unlike the amateur or unprofessional way; and third, that the principle which I have already mentioned before has been applied, which is thoroughness as opposed to superficiality. This means not ten modern sentences, a tie, a suit and I am now an expert in everything, but one thorough research and study of the matter we are dealing with, and then in addition to the analysis of the problems, a qualitative drafting of the plan of actions, their monitoring and later monitoring of the results can provide some changes.

And finally to deal with one of your general topics. What are, in your opinion, the biggest problems in the Serbian judiciary and whether they will be solved by the aforementioned activities?

I am an exceptional optimist when it comes to solving problems in the Serbian judiciary, based on the fact that we have a plan. If you want to have a quality building, you can bring craftsmen and tell them something like put this here, put it there, or you can create a plan that is approved and certified by an expert, like ours is now certified, and then to deliberately approach and achieve results. It is the same in our judiciary. One of the main

problems is infrastructure. We are working on it intensively. In the last four years, with 62 000 square meters of high-quality court or judicial area, we have reinforced Serbia. Judges must have working conditions. The second part of our infrastructural efforts are also measurable and set out in the plan, is the computerization and the non-computerization, which today is equal to literacy and illiteracy in the judiciary. It must urgently be implemented with all the consequences that will be good for the quality of the judiciary, strengthening of the procedural discipline, strengthening of the accountability of judges, measuring of the performance and quality of work of judges, and consequently the progress all on the basis of independence of the judiciary. It means that the judges evaluate their work themselves, and that by knowing one another and who is good and who is not, those getting promoted are the ones that the colleagues believe are worthy of such promotion, while we on our part need to provide what is necessary to the judges, and other participants in the judicial system. We can have judges from Switzerland or America, but if we have our lawyers and our clients, it will not fit. They all need to grow up slowly and to improve the judicial system. Without it there is nothing.

Paunović: Position of minorities in Serbia improved

Source: Tanjug



After statements from Romania that the country could put a veto on the accession of Serbia to the EU because of the Vlach minority, the Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, said the Serbian government does not react to threats and blackmails.

The government is dedicated to constructive cooperation in the region and the position of minorities in Serbia has improved, said Paunović.

She also recalled that in the previous period that in the past a lot has been done to improve the position of national minorities, as well as Romanian and Vlach, and added that she did not want to comment any "statements by representatives of political parties from other countries", including the statement of former President Traian Basescu, which she noted is probably more aimed at the internal political use.

Basescu has previously stated that the official Bucharest could veto Serbia's accession to the European Union, if Serbia fails to fully respect the bilateral agreement on the protection of the rights of the Romanian minority.

Paunović said that she is working together with the National Minority Councils on solving various problems, from exercising their right to education, the official use of language and script, information and preserving cultural identity.

"We have to do our job in the best way possible for every citizen of Serbia and the results we achieve should speak for us, and in the process of European integration, as we have seen, it is being evaluated", she said.

Paunović thanked the Government of Romania for its support of Serbia on the path of European integration, reminding that that country has provided support for the opening of Chapter 23 and showed readiness to share its experience with Serbia and provide its expertise in the process.

This support is appreciated, she said, adding that her desire is for the bilateral issues with Romania in the coming period to be resolved more quickly. She pointed out that Serbia will give its constructive contribution to resolving all outstanding issues concerning the rights of Serbian nationals of Romanian origin.

In the National Council of Vlachs, Basescu's statement is once again seen as an open invitation for Serbia to declare Vlachs as Romanians, which, as Radiša Dragojević from

that Council said, is unfounded.

He estimated that the story from 2012 is repeating itself, when Basescu refused to sign the agreement on Serbia's candidacy for EU membership, demanding guarantees that the rights of the Romanian minority in Serbia will be better protected.

"Activities related to these ambitions in terms of demands for the introduction of education in Romanian and operation of the Romanian church took place in the meantime, but this is again an open invitation for Serbia to declare Vlachs as Romanians which is unfounded", Dragojević told Tanjug.

"Like all citizens, we consider Romania a friendly country. However, this reference to the protection of our rights is without any justification and without any reason", he said.

At the Association for Culture of the Romanians and Vlachs from Serbia "Ariadne Filum", they were not surprised by Basescu's statement, although, as pointed out in the meantime, they do not exactly expect Romanian veto.

President of the Association Zaviša Žurž told Tanjug earlier that they expect Serbia to respect its laws and the Constitution, and that they do not want to have to fight for their rights "by force".

"Protocol on the Romanian-Vlach minority, which was signed in 2012 by Serbia and Romania in Brussels, has not been met on almost any issue", he said and pointed out that this minority does not have a Romanian school, the liturgy in the Romanian language, the media...

Vlachs will not block Serbia on its European path

Serbia is the homeland of the Vlachs, and they will not block the path towards the EU, but they will also not allow someone to ask

a question of their identity and force them to present themselves as Romanians, said the president of the Vlach Party, Siniša Čelojević.

Čelojević in a statement said that in recent years the so-called "Vlach issue" appears in the media as someone's desire to present the members of the Vlach minority as people who will, at the very least, block the entry of Serbia into the European Union.

According to him, in the last decade and a half very strong influence of the Romanian

propaganda towards the Vlach population in the north-eastern Serbia has been observed, as well as the fact that the Republic of Romania and the Romanian Orthodox Church do not attempt to hide that their intention is to "convert" the Vlachs in Serbia into Romanians.

"This is the essence of the "Vlach issue" which, according to us, Vlachs, is not even

present. For we know that our only homeland is Serbia, within which, with more or less success, we achieve our minority rights, through several non-governmental organizations or political parties", said Čelojević.

He pointed out that, in addition to all this, in Serbia a few years ago the National Council of Vlachs started operating, an umbrella organization of everyone regarding themselves as Vlachs, as well as the National Council of the Romanian national minority.

"No reasonable person disputes the right of all those who believe that the Vlachs of north-eastern Serbia are allegedly Romanians, or Vlachs, whose mother tongue is Romanian to exercise their rights through the organization", said Čelojević.

"Violating thereby the rights of a great number of Vlachs who will never accept to be Romanians, nor that their native language is Romanian", said Čelojević.

President of Vlach party concluded that Vlachs, as natives in the area, will always consider Serbia as their only homeland.

"And our mother tongue will, as always, be Vlach. And we are ready to verify these claims on a referendum", concluded Čelojević.



Tepić: Possibility of Opening Four More Chapters by the End of the Year

Source: Tanjug



Chairwoman of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration, Marinika Tepić, expressed her hope that by the end of the year, four more negotiating chapters with the EU will be opened.

It was during the meeting of the members of the Committee at the House of the National Assembly, that she, along with member of the Bundestag, Iris Eberl, a German member of the Committee on EU Affairs, recalled the important step made by opening the negotiation chapters 23 and 24.

On that occasion, Tepić expressed her hope that "in accordance with a realistic view of the moment and the situation, during the Slovak Republic's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Chapters 5, 20, 25 and 26 will also be opened, of which the last two could quickly be closed".

The Assembly's Department of Public Relations issued the statement that, in the meeting with the German parliamentarian, Tepić welcomed and thanked Eberl for the continuous support Germany has been providing to Serbia on its path towards European Union membership.

Tepić emphasized the importance of the role of the Committee for European Integration in the consideration of the proposal of the

negotiation chapters received from the Government of the Republic of Serbia, as the chief negotiator in the process of European integration.

Iris Eberl thanked for the warm welcome and said that she is honored by the great response of the Members of the Parliament at the meeting. She expressed satisfaction with the significant presence of German companies in Serbia, in what she had the opportunity to convince herself on her the way through Serbia.

She also expressed confidence that, after the opening of the negotiating Chapter 23, conditions for foreign investments would further improve in Serbia.

Eberl pointed out that the Committee on European Affairs of the Bundestag, she is a member of, always tries to be objective, and as such would like to see Serbia in the European Union. She therefore recommended the intensification of cooperation between the two committees, to allow the suggestions and recommendations of Serbia to get an

even wider area of application.

MPs Vesna Marković, Vladimir Orlić and Elvira Kovač also took active part in the discussion..

Marković pointed out that it is of great importance to discuss all current issues, and stated that they should be extended to the issue of combating terrorism, which took on global proportions.

Vladimir Orlić, welcomed the representative of the Bundestag on behalf of the Parliamentary Committee for Stabilization and Association, he is the chairman of.

Eberl informed those present that she was appointed Rapporteur on behalf of her Committee for the national minorities, and that during her visit to Serbia she had the opportunity to meet with the German national minority representatives, who expressed satisfaction with the conditions that they enjoy as a national minority in Serbia.

On behalf of the national minorities' caucus in the Serbian Parliament, Elvira Kovač briefed Eberl on the institution of national councils of national minorities and the activities carried out by the Government in order to improve its cooperation with the national minorities living in Serbia, the statement said.

Njilaš: The Quality of Textbooks - a Topic before the Start of Each School Year

Source: RTV | Photo: www.vojvodina.gov.rs



Provincial Secretary for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities and the National Communities, Mihalj Njilaš said that the question of the quality of textbooks, especially in minority languages, remains current at the beginning of each school year.

In a working meeting, together with the representatives of national councils of national minorities, the Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina, the Institute for textbooks, Department of Novi Sad and the publishing house Klett, he stressed out that there is a desire to provide quality textbooks to students on time.



He also recalled that the new law on textbooks offers some simple solutions to existing problems, but - at the same time - it brings about other new questions and concerns. Therefore, the desire to provide quality textbooks to students on time and to establish a common line of action were the reasons for this meeting.

Assistant Provincial Secretary for Education, Biljana

Kašerić, said that fast and adequate solutions regarding the final approval of textbooks that are pending, textbooks for sec-

ondary schools, as well as the adoption of new original textbooks written in minority languages are necessary.

She emphasized the necessary solutions in terms of ambiguities in the procedures under the Law on textbooks.

Those present pointed out questions and difficulties that they encounter in their daily work, suggesting also possible solutions.

At the end of the meeting, it was concluded that the meetings of this type are very useful and will be regularly organized periodically, which will contribute to better cooperation between all concerned to ensure the quality of textbooks for students who are educated in their mother tongue.

Gender Equality in the Work of National Councils of National Minorities

Photo: Medijacentar

In late August, the Center for the Support of Women in Kikinda organized a seminar “Gender Equality in the Work of National Councils of National Minorities”. During three days in Andrevlje, the representatives of national councils addressed the issue of women’s human rights, gender mainstreaming policies, advocacy of gender

islativ authorities. In addition to inconsistent or arbitrary implementation of regulations, a special problem represents a mismatch of relevant strategies and action plans.

We wanted to know whether the issue of gender equality has been processed in the Action Plan to improve the status of national minorities.

mention gender equality. I fear that the working group that will work on amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities will not bear in mind that in the Action Plan concerning gender equality there are two points that need to be changed, meaning that the bodies of the national councils must include 30% members of the underrepresented sex, while the other changes is concerned with the establishment of a legal framework to facilitate the introduction of bodies within the national councils which are responsible for the promotion of gender equality”, said Vukasinović.

Also, according to her women in national councils in the following period have a great responsibility because they have to strive not only to improve their position within the national council, but for the fact that the issue of gender equality becomes recognized as strategically important from the aspect of protecting the rights of national minorities.

Ana Tomanova Mankanova, President of the National Council of the Slovak national minority, who is also the president of the Committee for Gender Equality of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina, was also one of the presenter at the seminar. She has stated for our Bulletin that by the end of this year all the national councils need to form working groups that will deal with gender equality, and she added that gender budgeting will soon enter into force, according to which national councils will determine their plans and activities.

Seminar “Gender Equality in the Work of National Councils of National Minorities” is another in a series of training for women and men that are active in the national councils of national minorities in Serbia, and whose maintenance has been supported by the OSCE Mission in Serbia for several years.



equality policies and planning activities on this topic that will be implemented by the national councils.

The seminar was opened by the OSCE Mission to Serbia Adviser, Leslie Hess, and among the speakers was also Eva Vukašinović, Deputy Provincial Protector of Citizens - Ombudsman for the protection of rights of national minorities. On this occasion, Vukašinović spoke about the legal and strategic framework of application of the principle of gender equality in relation to the exercise of the rights of national minorities. Special emphasis in her speech, Deputy Vukašinović put on the opportunities that the national councils have for gender mainstreaming policies, both within the Councils themselves, and also in relation to the institutions of the executive and leg-

“Action plans are designed to implement the process of accession as quickly as possible, and to put the areas that are important to us in focus. To my great regret, gender equality is not covered by its own Action Plan for National Minorities”, said Deputy Vukašinović.

“The issue of gender equality is enshrined in the great Action Plan, which refers to the general position of citizens in terms of realization of justice, and in this regard there are some review questions on equality between women and men, and it refers the State to adopt a national strategy with a special action plan for that area. The National Strategy for Gender Equality has been made, followed by the Action Plan, and when we talk about the Action Plan for minorities it does not

Days of Ruthenian Culture

Source: Ruske slovo

At the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade from 15 to 28 August "Days of Ruthenian Culture" were held. The event was the result of cooperation between the Ethnographic Museum, the Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Ruthenians, as well as many other institutions and individuals.

"Days of Ruthenian Culture" were opened by the exhibition "Rites of passage in the focus of the lens of the photographer Budinskih". Director of the Ethnographic

exhibition, Dr. Mirjana Đekić, ethnologist, before the Provincial Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, Dejan Radovanović, counsel, conservator at the



Museum, Mirjana Menković, said that the Days originated with the idea that national minorities present themselves in the best possible way, the one that complements what people already know or do not know about the Ruthenians.

Special thanks, as Milenković said, went to the aforementioned co-author of the

Museum of Vojvodina, who took care of the design part of the exhibition and Ljubica Otić, museum counselor at the Museum of Vojvodina.

At the opening ceremony the attendees were also welcomed by the president of the National Council of Ruthenians, Slavko Rac, Acting Director of the Institute for

Culture of Ruthenians in Vojvodina, Ivana Dudaš, Vice President of the Provincial Government and the Provincial Secretary for Economy and Tourism, Ivan Đoković.

The former director of the Institute for Culture of Ruthenians in Vojvodina, Sergej Tamaš, said that the Days of Ruthenian Culture in a certain way are a crown of all that the Institute set itself as a task, and one of those is the cooperation with professional institutions in order to present Ruthenian where they belong, such as the Ethnographic Museum.

During the following days, the audience was able to enjoy the literary creations of the Ruthenians, which were discussed by the academic Julian Tamaš, Mihal Ramač, Irina Hardi Kovačević and Nikola Šanta.

The presentations of the monographs "Dances of Bačka and Srem Ruthenians" and "Folk Costumes of Bačka and Srem Ruthenians" were not left out, which were discussed by the choreographers Joakim Rac, Nikola Gubaš and Zvonko Kostelnik, ethnographer Katarina Radisavljević and historian-curator Ljubica Otić, while the wedding traditions of the Ruthenians were presented by the members of KUD (Cultural Artistic Society) "Žetva" (Harvest) from Kucura. The musical folklore part of the program was also attended by members of the KPD (Cultural and Educational Society) "Karpati" from Vrbas and ensemble House of Culture Ruski Krstur.

The Days of Ruthenian Culture in Belgrade were completed with a scientific lecture of Dr. Janko Ramač "Ruthenians in southern Hungary/Yugoslavia".



55th Slovak Folk Festival in Serbia

Photo: Hlas ljudu



A great number of members of the Slovak national community in Serbia, as well as many Slovaks from abroad, gathered once again in Bački Petrovac for the 55th Slovak Folk Festival. This year's National Holiday of Slovaks in Serbia lasted from 5 to 7 August.

The opening ceremony of the central event, in addition to numerous citizens, was attended by numerous guests, among whom were representatives of national and provincial government, the Embassy of Slovakia in Serbia, representatives of the Slovak government, the National Council of the Slovak national minority, the Slovak Matica in Serbia, Slovak Matica and many others guests.

The event was officially opened by Vice President of the Provincial Government, Đorđe Milićević, and the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic, HE Dagmar Repčková.

Opening the event, Vice President Milićević said that good ethnic relations and respect for human and minority rights are one of the key symbols of the Republic of Serbia and AP Vojvodina, and that each national community is of great importance, and one of them is Slovak. On that occasion he said that in Serbia, particularly in Vojvodina, lives a large Slovak community, which over the 260 years built its own indigenous culture, and it tends to maintain and improve it to this day. He pointed out that the Slovak community has given a lot to Vojvodina, ranging from the naïve art in Kovačica, which is unique not only in Serbia but also in the world, to

rich folk heritage, traditional costumes, folk art, music, dance, different dialects and other values.

This year the organizers of the ceremony prepared a rich program once again. The program included a number of exhibitions, theater performances, book presentations, meetings of teachers, journalists and artists, as well as

numerous cultural and artistic programs and sports events.

As in the past few years, this year at the meeting of Slovak Journalists the prize "Ana Njemoga Kolar" was awarded once again for best media product about the Slovak minority in Serbia in any language other than Slovak. Award is presented by the National Council of the Slovak national minority, and the prize for this year was won by the journalist of "Politika", Višnja Arandelović, for the article "They go to Europe walking the Maršala Tita Street".



Agreement on the Provision of Textbooks in Albanian Signed

Source: Tanjug

Representatives of the Ministry of Education, the National Council of the Albanian minority and the Institute for textbooks, on August 9 signed the Agreement on the provision of missing textbooks in Albanian language.

Outgoing Minister of Education, Srđan Verbić, said that by signing the Agreement they managed to complete a big job, so as to provide textbooks in minority languages.

He recalled that a few months ago Agreements with representatives of seven national minorities have been signed, and that the Albanian national minority had not signed the agreement.



Positive initiative, he said, came from representatives of Bujanovac and Preševo, so that after the signing of the Agreement follows the preparation of all missing textbooks.

He recalls that the action of providing textbooks in the languages of national minorities was best evaluated in the implementation of Action Plans for Chapter 23.

"I am pleased that we have successfully completed this phase of work by the end of the mandate", said Verbić. It is now necessary, he continued, to implement joint action to prepare the textbooks - translate the existing ones or write new ones.

President of the National Council of the Albanian national minority, Jonuz Musliu, reminded that in the Preševo valley

students have been without textbooks in Albanian language for years.

"By September is a short term, but I hope that several textbooks will get translated", said Musliu.

Director of the Institute, Dragoljub Kojčić, said the Agreement is important for the Ministry, but also for the representatives of the Albanian national community.

"The Ministry has thus rounded the obligations of Serbia towards national minorities", said Kojčić.

Representatives of the Ministry of Education have previously signed the Agreement with the representatives of seven national minorities on the provision of missing textbooks – namely Bosniak, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak and Croatian national community.

To print the missing textbooks in the languages of national minorities the Ministry of Education has provided 134 million dinars.

Bosniak Community

Rounding the Model of Teaching in the Bosnian Language in Sandžak

Source: Bosniak National Council

Representatives of the Bosniak National Council today held a meeting with the Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development, Dr. Srđan Verbić on the topic of implementation of the Memorandum on cooperation in the field of publishing textbooks in the Bosnian language, which was signed on 24 March 2016 in Belgrade with the Ministry of Education and PE Institute for textbooks.

On the same day, the representatives of the Council have conducted interviews with representatives of the Institute for Evaluating Education Quality on the topic of development of educational standards and the final exam for the first generation

of students of the 8th grade of elementary school who are finishing classes in the Bosnian language in the 2016/2017 school year, thereby rounding the process of education in the Bosnian language to elementary school.

Standards are the basis for a final exam that students take in their native Bosnian language, and will contribute to the quality of knowledge of students who attend classes in the Bosnian language.

At the meeting, the Bosniak National Council was represented by Vice President of the Council, Esad Džudžo, and prof. Dr. Sead Šemsović, a member of the Board of Education and author of textbooks for the Bosnian language with elements of national culture.

Days of Bunjevac Culture

Source: www.bunjevci.net

Un Bajmok, traditionally on the last weekend in August, the "Days of Bunjevac Culture" were held, organized by BKC (Bunjevac Cultural Center) "Bajmok". This year's edition was eleventh, and, as in the previous years, it was divided into two parts. Friday, August 26, was reserved for the promotion of the documentary, while a day later the smell of traditional gourmandize within the "Festival of Bunjevac Cuisine" was in the air.

The second day of the event in Bajmok was dedicated to cooking traditional dishes, and about thirty participants prepared sixty almost equally delicious dishes. All participants received diplomas, while the best were especially rewarded. Ivanka Tumbas had the busiest booth, prize for the presentation of the farmer's breakfast was awarded to "Desin salaš" from Sombor,



guests from the Association of Germans "Maria Theresiopolis" prepared the best cake, the youngest cook was Ena Mihaljević, the oldest dish (listići) was prepared by Marija Bagi, and UG (Association of Citizens) "Bunjevačka vila" got the prize for the most authentic dish - peppers, while Dragica Lazić Kaluđerski, from "Dadin salaš" from Sivac, was voted the best cook. A special award was given to the "veteran" of the Festival, Katica Bedeković, this year she could not cook, but she still came to offer her support.

About Bunjevac Culture in Novi Sad

Cultural Center of Novi Sad hosted the central celebration of the "Days of Bunjevac Culture" in Novi Sad, and it is an event which is organized for the third year by UG "Bunjevački kulturni centar - Novi Sad".

It was an opportunity to solemnly display, in front of many high officials and other

guests, two ethno-exhibition "The crown - a symbol Dužijanica" and "Diligent Hands - From Grain to Bread" by Stipan Budimčević, and Kata Kuntić.

- We are very pleased that for the third time at the Cultural Center of Novi Sad we had the opportunity to host the Cultural Artistic Societies of the Bunjevac national body who want to introduce themselves and show their traditional creativity. Of course, we manage to do it with the help of the City of Novi Sad, and the National Council of the Bunjevac national minority. The backbone of the program is to mark the national holiday "Dužijanica". That is why we showed the crowns made of straw on one ethno-exhibition, and on the other the path that each grain has to undergo in order to become a bread - said Svetlana Babić, President of the UG "Bunjevački kulturni centar - Novi Sad".

Among the guests was also Zdravko Jelušić, President of the Assembly of the City of Novi Sad. When addressing the media, before the program he emphasized:



- Novi Sad has been recognized as a city in which all are welcome with their manifestations, because this has always been a city that is a symbol of multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism. We are pleased and I believe that Dužijanica will continue to be celebrated in Novi Sad, not only in the next year or two, but that it will become a traditional event.

How important it is to introduce Bunjevac community in Novi Sad, explained Dr. Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić, President of the National Council of the Bunjevac national minority.

- It is extremely important to present yourself, not only where you are, but to show others your culture. Novi Sad is the administrative center of Vojvodina, and it is important to be presented in a place where the destiny of all national minorities in the province is shaped. But, we are, at least in small part, at home, I will only remind you of the year 1918, and the Grand National Assembly.



Croats from Serbia Participated in the Conference on Croatian-Serbian Relations

Source: Hrvatska riječ

Un Golubić near Obrovac (Croatia) from 19 to 21 August, a scientific symposium was held, and a meeting of politicians dedicated to the Croatian-Serbian socio-political relations. The meeting was organized by the Center for History, Democracy and Reconciliation from Novi Sad and the Association for History, Democracy and Reconciliation from Golubić and it represents the ninth international meeting (Scientific Symposium) on the Croatian-Serbian Relations entitled "Croatian-Serbian Relations; Refugees and Migrants, Peaceful Coexistence and the Resolution of the Crisis". The meeting in Golubić brought together the relevant political actors at the national and local level, representatives of civil society, the media, independent experts, etc.

Relations on the Lowest Level

While the issue was mainly focused on the outstanding issues and challenges brought by migrant crisis, other relevant issues were also discussed at the meeting, including the current position of the Croatian community in Serbia and of the Serbian community in Croatia. The open issues that still exist between the two countries have been further deepened by the worsening of migrant crisis that has hit the territory of the Western Balkans. Understanding of the existing situation and the review of the current



position of the Croats in Serbia, as well as possible perspectives for improvement were provided by the chairman of

the Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina, Tomislav Žigmanov, as reported by the press service of that party.

Žigmanov pointed out that representatives of the Croats in Serbia, but also the members of the Croatian community themselves, strive to be actively involved in the political events and to actively contribute, through their actions, to a better and more transparent decision-making that is important for the Croats in Serbia. Commenting on the current situation in Croatian-Serbian relations Žigmanov stressed out that the situation is at the lowest levels since the 90s, at the same time believing that responsibility lies in the activities of some political actors who were active in the 90s. Because of such activities, Žigmanov believes, Croatian communities in Serbia are stigmatized, instrumentalized as one of the main culprits, they are excluded from making decisions that are important for their position.

Education Strategy for the First Time

Source: Croatian National Council



Uthis year the Croatian national minority will for the first time get a drafted and adopted document "Strategy for Education of Croats in Serbia".

After a few documents, a platform of education, work, searching and reflection on the topic of education of Croats in Serbia,

a group of young and ambitious professionals contributed to the education of the Croats in Serbia to gain special note and

chart a course based on meticulous analysis and research. This step was prompted by the Open Society Foundation, which approved the project of compiling and printing of this important document.

Implementation of the project is already at the advanced stage, training of team members has been completed, as well as the determination of the vision, missions, analysis of archival documents, and it all needs to be followed by another public opinion poll, drawing up of an action plan in order to consolidate strengths and overcome weaknesses. After preparation, the document will undergo public hearings in order to get as many members of the community to become involved and to contribute, so that the dead letters on the paper become a "living" thing which will be advocate and wholeheartedly conducted by the largest number of members of the Croatian community in Serbia.

TV Mozaik Stopped Working

Earlier this month the editorial board of TV Mozaik from Novi Sad announced that after 12 years it will indefinitely suspend broadcasting.

As stated in the press release, the work has been stopped due to negligence and irresponsibility of the founder, as well as the lack of basic working conditions. Since then, they have been broadcasting only archival programs. The editorial room has for years tried to report about the events which were ignored by the other media, and which referred to the Hungarian national community, thus gaining respect with a wider circle of viewers.

Please note that the employees of this television received their last salary in April this year. They do not have health



insurance, and no contributions for pension and disability insurance have been paid. In recent years there has been a decrease in the number of employees as well as in part-time hired associates. Instead of 16 employees, only 7 workers were left by August of the current year.

Our source, who wished to remain anonymous, for this edition of the Bulletin said that the whole situation is aggravated by the fact that the authorities are not releasing any information on whether the work will be continued or not. "We were told that we remain employed at the TV Mozaik, but that we no longer have to come to work. Of course, we did not get our salaries, but we do not know whether we will get them at all, nor how long will this agony last", our source stated.

This TV is the first independent television of the Vojvodina Hungarians established on 1 September 2004, by the Foundation "Mozaik".

Its local program that is shared at a frequency with TV Delta was broadcast alternately for two hours a day, and thanks to cable operators, it had a regional character.

Roma Community

Increased Number of Employed Roma

Source: Tanjug

As the records of the National Employment Service in the first seven months of this year show, 1,752 Roma were employed, an increase of 92 percent compared to last year.

However, as they say from the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, the entire system must be included in order to solve the unemployment problem of the Roma community, and it is necessary to create a system of equal opportunities for all and to combat any prejudices that exist in our society.

As stated in the Ministry, it is necessary that the Roma are actively involved in looking for work, and the state should help through certain subsidies for self-employment.

An example of good practice is the company "Imo reciklaža" in Mladenovac, which employs about 50 people, mostly Roma.

Director of the National Employment Service, Zoran Martinović, praised "Imo reciklaža" as a positive example of a company that in partnership with the NSZ (National Employment Service) implemented active employment policy measures.

"Each year, the company recruits three to four Roma people. This might seem like a small number, but each position open to the Roma is valuable to us", said Martinović.

A good indicator is, he continues, the increased number of Roma registered with the National Employment Service which shows that the situation switched from passive to active phase of looking for a job.

"This year we plan to engage around 100 persons in the self-employment program, where they will be the starters of a business and employ themselves and their family members", said Martinović.

Roma Education is the key to their employment, and the Director of NSZ said that in the adult education program 1,450 persons were included last year, of which 635 Roma.

President of the National Council of Roma Vitomir Mihajlović said that unemployment among the Roma is about 90 percent, and

therefore they cannot get out of the vicious circle of poverty.

"An example of good practice are private companies where owners are members of the Roma community who employ a certain number of their fellow citizens", said Mihajlović.

He pointed out that the Roma are still not present in the public sector - healthcare, judiciary, schooling, police, and that the Government of Serbia plans to work more intensively on the implementation of the strategy that involves the inclusion of Roma in the public sector.

Director of the company "Imo reciklaža" Zoran Simić, said that the two companies employ more than 50 people at this time and that a number of employees are the members of the Roma minority.

In his own words, they use the NSZ subsidies and have good cooperation with the state, and that a small problem poses the unqualified labor, because technology moves forward, new methods and new technologies have to be used.



Centar za istraživanja migracija
Center for Migration Studies

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