

**The European Integration
Committee Informed of a Model
for Monitoring and Reporting
on Chapters 23 and 24**

**Municipalities Signed
the 1st Declaration
on Improving the Status
of Roma**

29 **Minority** **News**

october 2016



Velickovski: Communication between Institutions Should Be More Vivid

**Action Plan
Will Not Be
Revised**

**Round Table on
Minority Media and
Chapter 23 Negotiations
Organized**

HIGHLIGHTS



Action Plan to Be Revised?

The Serbian Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Governance, Ana Brnabic, has emphasized that the Action Plan for National Minorities, which is part of Chapter 23 in the accession negotiations with the EU, will not be revised, as demanded by Sulejman Ugljanin, the chairman of the Coordination of National Minority Councils.



Minority Media and the Negotiations on Chapter 23

The Hlas Ljudu Publishing has organised a roundtable in the Provincial Assembly on the subject "minority journalism in Serbia in the European integration process, with an emphasis on Chapter 23." The roundtable is the beginning of a public debate on minority journalism in the accession negotiations and it opens a new chapter in cooperation with the provincial, republic and international institutions which want to give their contribution through an intercultural dialogue on media topics.



A Jubilee of "Bunjevacko Kolo"

The Citizens' Association "Bunjevacko Kolo" has marked the 95th anniversary of its existence. A celebration was held in the Bunjevac House in Sombor, where an exhibition of artistic photographs of Petar Zamba was shown.

EDITORIAL 29

Where Are We now after So Many Years?

October, a month which has reminded us for fully 16 years of famous protests, democratic changes which we so eagerly awaited. Great protests broke out in Belgrade after the then Serbian President Milosevic rejected to recognise results of the presidential election. On October 5 that year, the whole Serbia was united in a struggle for democracy.

The beginning looked promising. Everyone believed in a better tomorrow, progress of our country. However...Changes which started were suddenly stopped and the whole society started to sink more and more. One can often hear that citizens' expectations regarding a better life have been betrayed. So much time, so many reforms and promises...Now, not only young people, but even elderly citizens are seeking jobs outside the country, minority communities must struggle to learn mother tongues unhindered, we pay minimal attention to media outlets, we abuse the judiciary...

There are a lot of problems, and we seem to forget that after 16 years we are still knocking on the doors of the EU. We are still being tested and if we fail, we will hardly have another chance. Our path to the EU depends to a large degree on relations with Kosovo and Metohija. The communication between Belgrade and Pristina is not always pleasant to be heard or read, but the lack of progress in the dialogue between these two parties can influence the accession negotiations. Nonetheless, 16 years on, there are people who are determined to fight for the rule of law and democracy. Maybe, not everything is black. Maybe, October dark clouds will go away and Sun will shine, the Sun which once started to shine, and then set.

30 different national minorities live in Serbia



and ONE newsletter for all

www.minoritynews.rs
f Minority News Portal

Sometimes, there is a lack of communication between institutions

This year, the Macedonian national minority celebrates the 70th anniversary of its moving to the Vojvodina. This community is trying to develop itself, which has been noticed by officials of their native country, Macedonia. However, Macedonians in Serbia encounter numerous problems, of which the president of the National Council of the Macedonian National Minority, Borce Velickovski, has spo-



This year the Macedonian community is celebrating a significant jubilee. How the 70th anniversary of the moving of Macedonians into the Vojvodina has been marked?

This year is interesting. Seventy years ago, a large number of Macedonians arrived from all parts of Macedonia – most of them from the Krivopalanacki area – in southern Banat, namely in Pancevo, Kacarevo, Glogonj, but also in Vrsac and Plandiste, on a famous train without a timetable. Today, we,

their descendants are citizens of the Republic of Serbia. Seventy years is not a short period of time. We did our best to organise a number of events this year to mark this jubilee since we mark it for the first time as a national minority in the Republic of Serbia. This year we organised the planting of a Macedonian oak in all places that I have mentioned, as a symbol of friendship between Macedonians and Serbs, but also as a symbol of a long life and long duration of mutual tolerance and friendship. We paid visits to all these

places. It was an interesting experience. Of course, we plan a number of other events, and some of them have already been held. We plan to finish the year with erecting a monument which will be called “Mother Macedonia”, as this year’s event is also called. The sculpture was made by sculptor Sinisa Noveski, a student of famous Tome Serafimovski. Tome Serafimovski is the author of a sculpture of St. Cyril and Methodius in Belgrade. We plan to make a documentary, for which purpose money has already been allo-

cated. We planned a great number of events, some of which we have already promoted and some will be promoted. This depends on the finances, and we have a good will.

As you have already said, 70 years is not a short period of time. To what extent have you been satisfied with the status of the Macedonian national minority in Serbia for all these years?

I have been the president of the National Council of the Macedonian National Minority in Serbia for a number of years, I have been holding some offices since it was founded, and I have been the president of the Council in the two last terms. I am monitoring the life and work of all national minorities. I was also the president of the Coordination of National Councils in Serbia. And I have always stressed that despite a number of problems, Serbia is one of the rare countries, if not the only country in the region and I can freely say the only country in Europe and the world, which has a system for protection of rights of national minorities through national councils as state institutions. Something similar exists in Croatia, but there, you have one national council which gathers all national communities. The National Council of National Minorities, which is chaired by the prime minister, functions here. These mechanisms should be improved, but they really offer prospects for the realisation of high level of rights, which really does not exist in the region. Wherever I go, both in Serbia and Macedonia, I always say this, since this is the pride of Serbia and I think that Europe can learn something from us in this area.

Certain minority communities stress the situation in education, particularly this year, as a burning issue, the situation pertaining to minorities of course.

Fist, I would like to say a few words as an introduction. In 1991, we were a constituent people in the then Yugoslavia. Now we are among new national minorities just like Croats, Slovenians and Montenegrins, and maybe we need a greater and stronger incentive in this area. In 2011, we managed to include the Macedonian Language and Culture with Elements of National Culture curriculum in Serbia's education system. Our curriculum for this subject, which was ready back in 2006, was approved. Textbooks for the 1st and the 2nd grade pupils have been completed, and I have information that textbooks for the 3rd grade have

also been completed. We applied for approval for textbooks for the 4th grade pupils and we are working on textbooks for 5th to 8th grade students. At the moment, the Macedonian Language and National Culture is being taught in several towns in Serbia, in places where we can do it, where there are more Macedonians, primarily in Jabuka, where the pilot project of learning this subject has started. In Jabuka, we have 5th grade students who have learned this subject since the beginning of their education, in Kacarevo, we have 4th grade students who have learned the subject, and what is very interesting, since last year, this curriculum has been included in

I have been there since the beginning; I made maximum efforts towards realising the rights of the Macedonian and other national minorities and the Serbian people.

schools in Leskovac, southern Serbia, where we have two classes with more than 60 students. The subject is being taught in the Goce Delcev Elementary School, which was named after our revolutionary, in Jabuka, in the Zarko Zrenjanin Elementary School in Kacarevo and in the Svetozar Markovic Elementary School in Leskovac. It is interesting that there is a great interest in learning this subject in areas where we did not expect it. This year we have more than 100 students in elementary schools in Vranje who are interested in learning this subject, which is also very interesting, and they are 5-8th graders. We are in touch with the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Institute for the Improvement of Education and the National Educational Council. We are very closely cooperating with these institutions. The Macedonian Language with Elements of National Culture curriculum, which was submitted last October, has not yet been on the agenda of the National Educational Council. The Ministry did its part of the job as well as the Insti-

tute for the Improvement of Education. We have been waiting for a decision of the National Educational Council for several months. We finally concluded that the communication between these institutions failed. The school year has started and it can happen that we do not have the subject curriculum for 100 students. Textbooks are another story. I will be very honest with you, and I say this also at sessions of the Coordination and the Ministry, this process is very slow. Now we have 5th graders who are in this programme, and we have textbooks only for 1st and 2nd grade students. It is interesting that we are preparing the textbooks, even though the Ministry should do it. The National Council is allocating funds from their regular funds to pay authors, illustrators, editors, and all the people that are needed to make a good textbook. We submit all this to relevant institutions and after a long waiting period, they give us a green light, and then we buy these same textbooks from them, which is a waste of money. All this money is the money from the budget of the Republic of Serbia, but I think that this system should be a little better organised. I hope that the new minister will pay a little more attention to this issue. This process should be accelerated, communication between relevant institutions of the Republic of Serbia and National Councils should be more vivid and quicker, and then I believe that everything will be as it should be.

What is the situation like in the media? Does the Macedonian community have media contents in their mother tongue?

At the moment, we have the Public Broadcasting Service which is obliged to do it in keeping with the Constitution. We discussed this issue at the Serbian Council for National Minorities which is chaired by the prime minister. The law on media made a little confusion when it comes to news in minority languages. I must take this opportunity to praise the Chronicle of National Minorities show which is a result of operations of Minority News and an internet site which was launched at the time I was the president of the Coordination of National Councils. There was an idea that we, as national minorities, should be heard on the national frequency. It is very important that as many people as possible can see and hear us. However, the network of local media is jeopardised or does not exist anymore. I must say that before the pas-

sage of this law we had a radio and TV show on RTV Pancevo called "Banatsko Sonce". In addition to a show called "Makedonsko Sonce" on RTV Vojvodina we also had a show called "Good Day Macedonia" on TV Leskovac, the Chronicle of National Minorities in Cacak, a show called "Infomak" in Vranje and several radio stations. Today, they do not exist anymore, except for the Banatsko Sonce show on RTV Pancevo. The only novelty at the moment is an addition to the Pancevac weekly. This weekly is issued in the territory of the city of Pancevo and it was the weekly with maybe the greatest circulation at the level of the former Yugoslavia. During that time, some 30 years ago, the weekly had additions not only in Macedonian, but in Slovak, Hungarian and Romanian languages, languages of national minorities living in Pancevo. We are particularly gladdened by a radio show on RTV Vranje which started being broadcast on September 1. So, these are some new models for informing our public.

You, as the president of the National Council of the Macedonian National Community, this year were awarded the Medal of Merits for Macedonia. Which of your activities contributed to this?

Maybe this question should be addressed to the President who awarded me this high recognition and to his special awards commission. We have dealt with these issues for 15 years, since 2001. At that time I was one of the youngest activists of the Macedonian national community, now I am not anymore. We passed a certain road, having in mind that until 1991 we were a constituent people. In 2002, we were not organised as a national community and then we started to organise ourselves through civil organisations, associations, and after that, through national councils. I have been there since the beginning, I made maximum efforts towards realising the rights of the Macedonian and other national minorities and I am glad that someone recognised it. I must tell you that the National Council, which I have been chairing for the past six years, received a very high recognition of the Republic of Macedonia in 2013. The decoration I received was awarded for personal merits, primarily for affirming Macedonia in the world and, what is very important to me, for improving relations between the Republic of Macedonia and some other country. In this case, the country is the Republic of Serbia

where I have lived for 35 years. I am a citizen of this country, I love this country as I love Macedonia, my homeland. All these efforts, not only regarding the realisation of rights of the Macedonian community, but efforts towards connecting two brotherly peoples, two peoples which have never had, and I hope will never have, any problems, were the reason why the Macedonian President noticed me and awarded me this great recognition.

It is the job of the state to protect all interests, our job is to protect the interests of the national communities, and it is our common job to find a compromise.

There is a working body for gender equality in your National Council, which puts you among (only) three National Councils which have formed such a body. Were members of this body active in the past period? What is the situation like when it comes to gender equality in your National Council?

In 2012, our National Council formed the Committee for Equality, and now, having in mind that in keeping with the new law, there are only four committees (for education, culture, information and official use of languages and scripts), this is a working body. If we deal with rights, that is, the protection of the existing rights, the increase of rights of national minorities, in this particular case of the Macedonian national community, through culture, education, media, official use of language and script, then it is not logical not to deal with this segment which is very important for a healthy society. We recognised this need at the proposal of our female colleague Ljubica Dojcinovska who at a time was a member of the Council, and formed the Committee. There are financial problems, of course; we must find funds for a great number of activities of this body. But the Committee is trying to be present in education, namely, to take part in all roundtables and conferences deal-

ing with gender equality. Our idea is to educate members of our Macedonian national minority about the human rights in this field. In the end, gender equality means that we were all born equal, and this is how we should behave. Our National Council really does not have a problem with this. I am the president of the Council, and of the two vice-presidents, one is a woman. Of the two large boards, two are headed by men, and two by women. The working body for gender equality is headed by my female colleague, Darinka Stamenka. There are many ladies in our National Council, in the Macedonian community in general, and a great number of civil organisations in Serbia are headed by women. We are proud of it and I think that it is very important that gender equality does not mean the mere presence of women, but the presence of a less represented gender, so I sometimes make a joke and say that one should take care of us, men, as we will soon become threatened. This is only a joke, of course. I think that we should share responsibilities and rights in the same way.

In the end, we have a question that concerns all national minorities in Serbia. We are talking about the Action Plan for the Realisation of Rights of National Minorities as part of Chapter 23. Are you satisfied with the adopted Action Plan?

Having in mind that I took part in drafting the Action Plan for Chapter 23 at the invitation of the director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Perovic, as a representative of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia, I cannot say that we are not satisfied, but I also cannot say that we are fully satisfied. What I can say is that we got stacked in drafting this Action Plan. We had a great number of sessions, meetings, roundtables where we analysed the document, analysed every word which should be in the Action Plan. It is the job of the state to protect all interests, our job is to protect the interests of the national communities, and it is our common job to find a compromise. That which is good in this part of the Action Plan is its implementation, which sometimes is late, but I hope that this will be resolved in the second part. That which is good in paper could have been better maybe, but it always can be better. I hope that the implementation will be good and then we can say that we are fully satisfied.

Minority Media and the Negotiations on Chapter 23

Source: Hlas Ljudu

In the second part of October, the Hlas Ljudu Publishing organised a roundtable in the Provincial Assembly on the subject of “minority journalism in Serbia in the European integration process, with an emphasis on Chapter 23.”

The Director of Hlas Ljudu, Samuel Ziak, the Deputy Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Serbia, Peter Susko, the president of the National Council of the Slovak National Minority, Ana Tomanova, and the editor in chief of the Hlas Ljudu weekly, Vladimira Dorcova Valtnerova, welcomed those present, and Vladimira Dorcova Valtnerova has stressed that the role of the media is not to mere inform the public, but also to launch such debates on the role and status of the media.

The roundtable, which was held in the hall of the Vojvodina Provincial Assembly, was organised by the Hlas Ljudu Publishing, by which this institution launched a public debate on the subject of minority media in the process of accession negotiations.

Slobodan Arezina, a member of the team negotiating with the EU, has said that it is extremely important that these reforms are conducted before accession to the EU. “I am against the so-called artificial accession since I think that it is good that all countries in this part of Europe undergo this process in a way which will mean changes to the laws, practice and institutions. Membership is an important goal, but it is more important that every future member state undergo the process of adaptation,” Arezina has said. According to him, a solution offered in the Action Plan, which will enable the continuity of the media, must be implemented. “Minority media cannot be seen the same way as the media in the language of the majority since these media cannot endure a competition, and they were not founded with the same purpose.”

The participants in a panel discussion were interested to know what minority media can expect from the Province, namely, will it remain the main financier of these media. Djordje Vukmirovic, the Deputy Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Informa-



tion and Relations with Religious Communities in charge of the media, has said that the situation with the financing will not become worse, but to the contrary, ways will be found to increase the budget both for the financing of minority media and projects.



The participants in a panel discussion did not left out the subject of privatisation of local media. Ana Jaskova, the president of the Information Committee of the National Council of the Slovak National Minority, has said that the law, but also the Action Plan for Minorities, stipulate that the pri-

vatized local and regional media should be financed by way of competitions. “Provincial institutions, in cooperation with journalists’ associations and civil initiatives, have organised a sort of basic training for journalists and editors in the first cycle of competition financing, but they noticed a small interest of local governments, which leads to a number of irregularities, primarily in calling these competitions and non-transparency in the distribution of funds.” The participants also adopted conclusions. They support the Action Plan for the Negotiation Chapter 23 which the Republic of Serbia set as a priority in improving the institutional and legal framework in the area of basic human and minority rights. A sufficient and stable financing which guarantees sustainability of the media in languages of national minorities should, as the Action Plan stipulates, be realised primarily through the continued budget support for media owned by National Councils of National Minorities and they should be exempt from privatisation, in keeping with the law on public information and media. They concluded that a ban on employment in the public sector negatively impacts on prospects for hiring new personnel by minority media, and proposed that media be exempt from this ban, and that one should insist on all sorts of support to the development of minority media’s digital editions in keeping with the so-called digital agenda.

The Action Plan for National Minorities Will Not Be Revised

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights

The Serbian Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Ana Brnabic, has said that the Action Plan for National Minorities, which is part of Chapter 23 in the accession negotiations with the EU, will not be revised. After a meeting with presidents of the National Councils of National Minorities, Brnabic explained that there was no reason for a revision

this mechanism has been recognised by the EU, the Council of Europe and the OSCE, as one of the best mechanisms for the protection of national minorities.

According to her, the Government did a lot in the past period in the development of the dialogue and securing the development of rights and freedoms of national minorities through the co-

plementation of this Plan which pertains to the period until the end of June 2016. The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Brankica Jankovic, has said that the state did a lot in improving the system of protection and realisation of rights of national minorities.



of the document and added that this Plan had been brought by consensus, in the preparation of which representatives of 21 national minorities took part.

She has said that representatives of the Bosniak national minority took part in the drafting of this plan and that then they excluded themselves from further work. The chairman of the Coordination of National Minority Councils, Sulejman Ugljanin, who did not attend the meeting, proposed the revision of the plan. Brnabic has said that Serbia confirmed that it is a leader in Europe in respecting the minority rights and that it intends to remain so.

A great thing by which Serbia differs from other countries, including those in the EU, in respecting the rights of national minorities is that our country has institutionalised a mechanism for cooperation with national minorities through cooperation with national councils, she said. Brnabic has said that

operation with national councils on the Action Plan for the Realisation of Rights of National Minorities which was adopted in March this year.

Brnabic has said that the full implementation of this Action Plan is the most important task at the moment, noting that the relevant Ministry rely on National Councils and institutions such as the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and the Office for Human and Minority Rights. She has said that the work on amending and supplementing two important laws – the law on the rights of national minorities and the law on national councils of national minorities - is ahead of our country.

The director of the Serbian Government's Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunovic, has said that this body is monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan for National Minorities and that it has already started to prepare a report on the im-

At a press conference held on October 13 in the National Council of the Bosniak National Minority, the chairman of the Coordination of National Minority Councils, Sulejman Ugljanin, said, among other things, that the Action Plan, which is being drafted, did not include important proposals from National Councils of National Minorities and does not contain key obligations of the state towards national minorities. On behalf of the Coordination, he presented the following requests:

- The Serbian Government should bring a decision to revise the existing Action Plan for National Minorities
- The Serbian Government should ensure that proposals and requests of Bosniaks and other minorities be adequately discussed and included in the new Action Plan
- The new Action Plan should clearly define activities the state should undertake in order to resolve problems facing minorities
- Holders of activities on behalf of the state should be clearly designated
- Final deadlines for completion of activities should be clearly and precisely set
- Necessary funds and sources of financing should be determined
- A new action plan should be approved by the Republic of Serbia Council for National Minorities

The European Integration Committee Informed on the Monitoring of Chapters 23 and 24

Source: Tanjug

On October 6, members of the European Integration Committee were informed of a model of monitoring and reporting on Chapters 23 and 24, which was agreed with representatives of the European Commission.

The model of monitoring and reporting was presented by the chief negotiator for Serbia's accession negotiations with the EU, Tanja Miscevic, who said that Chapters 23 and 24 would be opened until the end of the negotiation process and which, along with Chapter 35 represent control chapters which influence the whole course of the negotiations.

She added that a way and dynamics of reporting on the implementation of action plans, reporting on harmonization of a normative framework and understanding of transitional measures for chapters had been agreed with the European Commission.

Miscevic has stressed that in addition to internal mechanisms of reporting – reports will be submitted quarterly for Chapter 23 and monthly for Chapter 24, Serbia will inform the European Commission of the implementation of action plans twice a year, and will submit extraordinary reports at the request of EU member states.

Also, after this year's European Commission's progress report, the next one will be presented in 2018, while in the meantime short reports will be submitted to additionally inform EU member states, which is an additional instrument of monitoring, Miscevic said.



She has reminded members of the negotiation team of a variegated composition of the present Parliament which includes euro sceptics, but also of the role of Parliament, Committee and the National Convent for the EU in the process of determining the negotiation

positions for various chapters.

Tepic has said that the Committee will additionally intensify its monitoring role, particularly in monitoring the implementation of measures, as a supplement to internal reporting on progress and implementation of action plans. She has also informed the chief negotiator for Serbia's accession negotiations with the EU that parliamentary contacts with colleagues from Estonia, the country which will chair the EU Council next year, will be intensified.

Committee members, heads of negotiation groups for Chapters 23 and 24 and representatives of the National Convent for the EU have exchanged opinions on concrete issues concerning the reporting, but also on future activities that will be before the European Integration Committee.



The chair of the European Integration Committee, Marinika Tepic, has said that all previous governments which worked on this process for years are credited for the present phase in the European integration process.



Municipalities Signed the First Declaration on Improving the Status of Roma

Source: The Office for Human and Minority Rights

Since mobile teams for Roma inclusion were founded more than two years ago, they changed the lives of many for the better, by providing daily aid in the field, said Suzana Perovic, the director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights. Paunovic opened a con-

ference on “Roma Inclusion – Challenges and Opportunities at the Local Level” in Smederevo, as part of the project titled “We are Here Together – European Support to Roma Inclusion.”

ments, which municipalities recognised as their priority, look like. Speaking of the importance of mobile teams, Paunovic has said that whether it is assistance in child education, the issuing of health ID cards or responding to questions regarding employment,

progress, development and the use of all potentials of the Roma community.

Oscar Benedict, the Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia, has stressed the importance of the adopted Strategy for Roma Inclusion, noting that the EU remains committed to resolving this issue. Benedict has said that this project is worth 4.8 million euros and that additional 20 million euros is expected in the coming period. His Excellency, Ambassador Andrea Orizio, the Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, has said that today’s meeting is a proof of a great importance of the cooperation between all partners in reaching project goals. On behalf of implementation partners, Orizio particularly thanked the Office for Human and Minority Rights for its contribution to the coordination of project activities.

Vitomir Mihajlovic, the president of the National Council of the Roma National Minority, thanked the Serbian Government, municipalities and cities for taking part in this project.



Suzana Paunovic said on the occasion that the Government was committed to

Roma inclusion which is proven by the fact that all institutional mechanism for monitoring the progress in this field at the national and local level have been set up, as well as a coordination between the Government, local self-governments, civil sector and donors.

- Today’s gathering is an opportunity to exchange good practices in the work of mobile teams at the local level and share good experiences in resolving housing issues through 18 models of housing on which we worked in the past period. Paunovic called on representatives of 32 local self-governments who were in attendance to see the first exhibition of urban plans, stressing that this is an opportunity to see how plans for settle-

their constant presence and their work on resolving problems are of key importance. The result of this hard work is that the mobile teams have become a crucial resource in their communities and an important mechanism for the achievement of local and national goals for Roma inclusion, Paunovic has said.

The fact that the heads of 20 municipalities have signed the 1st Declaration on Improving the Status of Roma at the Local Level is a confirmation that this concept has its place and prospects in the future, as is the fact that a guide for establishing mobile teams, which should serve other municipalities and cities, has been drafted as part of the project, Paunovic has said.

She has said that the new Strategy for Roma Inclusion for the period 2016-2020, which the Government adopted, created a framework for implementing more activities at the local level which brings new obligations to the local self-governments, but also opportunities for



“We proved by our joint work that there are no problems that cannot be solved, and the Roma national minority respects this efforts made by the Government and local governments”, Mihajlovic said. The participants had an opportunity to see a brief presentation of a Database on Monitoring the Implementation of Measures for Roma Inclusion, and an exhibition of urban plans for settlements which municipalities recognised as their priority.

Classes in Mother Tongue as an Elective Subject

Source: Provincial Government / Hlas Ljudu

The Provincial Deputy Prime Minister and the Provincial Secretary for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities, Mihalj Njilas, opened a meeting on Monday, October 17, 2016, in the Provincial Government Building, on the subject of “Mother tongue with elements of national culture – learning elective subjects at elementary and secondary schools.” The meeting was held at the initiative of the Coordination of National Minority Councils and the National Council of the Slovenian National Minority. In addition to representatives of National Councils (Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Croatian, Bunjevac and Czech national minorities), the meeting was also attended by the State Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Anamarija Vicek.

In his introductory speech, Secretary Njilas said: “A mother tongue has a double role in the life of each and everyone of us – it is in the service of development of a personality and development of identity,” and added: “In the past period, our Secretariat has already discussed problems in learning a Mother Tongue with Elements of National Culture, and even initiated amendments and supplements to the Rulebook on the Curricula for elementary and secondary schools.”

The Secretary has said that the present political system provides an opportunity for an even stronger cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, particularly when it comes to education in the languages of national minorities and national communities. This is proven by relations between the coalition partners, and by the fact that for the first time a state secretary in a state education body is from among a national minority (Anamarija Vicek).

Anamarija Vicek has said that there are plans to reform education and the law on foundations of the education system. A mother tongue, as a school subject, takes an extremely important place in this plan. Representatives of National Councils presented their observations from the practice. Students, who want to learn a Mother Tongue with Elements of National Culture, and their parents, must opt for it at the beginning of each school year. There are problems in some schools with polls for parents even

when they are enrolling their children in the first grade, and later. Having in mind that a small number of students opt for these classes in many schools, the most common problem is to form a group. Also a great difficulty is that

students are at different levels of knowledge of their mother tongue, and the curriculum is designed in keeping with a classical scheme of curricula – without differential contents. An analysis of textbooks for this subject showed that in a great number of cases textbooks do not even exist. An additional problem are languages which are not standardised (for example, Roma language, Bunjevac dialect).

In the end of the meeting, the participants agreed that a proposal of guidelines for improving classes of a Mother Tongue with Elements of National Culture should be made. A minimum and maximum number of students in one group and a maximum age difference among students (maximum three years) in one group should be determined and these classes should be included in schools’ official class schedule. Also, a proposal from National Councils that education boards, in cooperation with publishers, should provide for competent authors, translators, editors and reviewers who would be able to prepare textbooks and additional literature for this subject, should be supported.



The 95th Anniversary of the Citizens' Association "Bunjevacko Kolo" Marked

Source: Bunjevci

The Citizens' Association called "Bunjevacko Kolo" of Sombor solemnly marked its anniversary.

"The 95th anniversary is a jubilee which a few organisations or associations celebrate. The Bunjevci,

The president of the Assembly of the City of Sombor, Zoran Parcetic, the Head of the Western Backa District, Latinka Vasiljkovic, a member of the City Council for Culture and Education, Nemanja Sarac, MP Vlado Babic, the director of the Institute for the Study of Cultural De-

velopment of Serbia, Marinka Lukic Cvetic, the vice-president of the National Council of the Bunjevci National Minority, Nikola Babic, representatives of friendly associations and members of the Bunjevacko Kolo attended the celebration of this anniversary.



participants of the Great People's Assembly in Novi Sad, who gave their votes for these parts to become a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, founded the "Bunjevacko Kolo" in 1921. They also founded the Bunjevacko-Sokacka Party which received even twice as many votes as the ruling Radical Party in the elections for the Constitutional Assembly in 1920. This Bunjevac elite founded the Bunjevacko Kolo which tradition we nurture," the honorary president of the Citizens' Association Bunjevacko Kolo, Djuro Bosnjak, has said.



The Festival of Slovak National Costumes in the Vojvodina

Source: Southern Banat/Provincial Government

A national costume has always been a symbol of tradition among the Slovaks, it determined the economic and marital status and age. Every Slovak settlement had a specific national costume which differed from others by fashion, fabric, ornaments, colours and decorative details and jewellery. The Festival of Slovak National Costumes in the Vojvodina, which was held on October 2 in Kisac and which was attended also by the Deputy Provincial Prime Minister, Igor Mirovic, and Novi Sad Mayor Milos Vucevic, is aimed at preserving the 270 years of tradition and history of Slovaks in the Vojvodina in an original way, through national costumes. There were two exhibitions of photographs at the Festival, one exhibition of photographs of everyday national costumes and another of solemn national costumes. Costumes of 80

to 140 years were also presented. The Festival was an opportunity for every Slovak settlement in the Vojvodina to present their old national costumes.

The Vojvodina Deputy Prime Minister, Igor Mirovic, has said at the opening ceremony



vation of traditional values - is particularly rich, stressing that both the Vojvodina and Serbia are proud of this richness.

He stressed that it is our obligation to preserve in everyday life the tradition of good ethnic relations in the Vojvodina.

“We can say that the Vojvodina lives a life of unity, a life that enables such tradition to be preserved, but only if we help each other, if we understand each other and if we take an active part in the resolution of all problems,” Mirovic has said.

Novi Sad Mayor Milos Vucevic has said that it is a privilege to help the event which not only keeps the rich tradition, but makes Novi Sad a true capital of culture and strengthens its candidacy for a European capital of culture in 2021.

The director of the Kisac Cultural Centre and the author of the Festival, Pavel Surovi, has stressed that this festival is a sort of historical and ethnographical overview of the roots and tradition and that it gathered participants from all places in the Vojvodina where the Slovaks live. The festival in Kisac was also attended by the Ambassador of Slovakia to Serbia, Dagmar Repchekova.



Journalist Ivan Nikolov Received the European Citizen's Prize 2016

Source: Blic

The European Citizen's Prize 2016 was presented to the president of the Cultural and Information Centre in Bosilegrad, Ivan Nikolov, at the Republic of Bulgaria National Assembly in Sofia. Ivan Nikolov is a journalist and publicist.

Ivan Nikolov was awarded this high recognition of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for his contribution to the realization of personal and collective rights of the Bulgarian national minority in Serbia. This prestigious prize is awarded to one citizen from every EU member state every year.

- I hope that this recognition will engage not only Bulgaria and European institutions, but primarily Serbia, on finding a solution to grave problems from the past and on creating normal living conditions for our compatriots. It is not so much important whether I am a European citizen or not. It is important that the relations between Serbia and Bulgaria be European relations, and Bosilegrad and Dimitrovgrad decent European cities. I received this prize in hope that it gave a



national and European legitimacy to everything that I have spoken, written and done for the past two decades in favour of the rights of Bulgarians in Ser-

bia, the preservation and development of culture of the Bulgarian national minority, research of historical truth and overcoming difficult inheritance, in favour of national reconciliation of Bulgarians and Serbs and affirmation of European principles and values in Serbia. This prize is a message to all those who have been trying for 25 years to compromise and close the Cultural and Information Centre in Bosilegrad, journalist Ivan Nikolov told the Blic daily.

The laureate and citizen of Europe from Bosilegrad is a corresponding member of the Bulgarian Academy of Science and Arts, editor of the Bilten monthly magazine, poet, journalist and publicist. This well-known activist for the rights of Bulgarians who is engaged on preserving the tradition, language and culture of this national minority in Serbia was on a visit to Strasbourg where he attended a ceremony in which 52 recipients of the European Citizen's Prize on October 12 were presented.

Open for New Ideas and Projects

Source: Dnevnik

The Hungarian Cultural Centre was founded in Titel with the aim of preserving the national identity, tradition and historical heritage of the Hungarian national minority. In addition to this, its objective is that its operations are founded on principles of an open university for all forms of education, expert seminars, exhibitions, concerts and various sorts of creative workshops.

The Vojvodina Deputy Prime Minister and the Provincial Secretary for Education, Regulations and National Minorities, Mihalj Njilas, and the Head of Titel Municipality, Dragan Bozic, cut the ribbon and opened the premises of the Hungarian Cultural Centre. The ceremony was also attended by the State Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Anamarija Vicek, members of the Vojvodina Provincial Assembly from the Alliance of the Vojvodina Hungarians, members of the Hungarian National Council, and representatives of the local government.

The Cultural and Artistic Society Tiski Cvet, which has its branch in the nearby Ilok where Hungarians comprise more than 20% of the population, is active in the Hungarian Cultural Centre. The vice-president of the Centre, Lajos Erdeg, has said that this institution is open for all who have ideas and projects which can contribute to a richer cultural content in Titel Municipality.

A Hungarian language course is regularly held in the Centre, in which there

is a great interest, and in the coming period other language courses are expected to be launched. The president of the Hungarian Cultural Centre in Titel is Magda Latinkic, and vice-presidents are Lajos Erdeg and Imre Bobojcek. The leadership of the Hungarian Cultural Centre in Titel is grateful to the local government in Titel, which recognized the need for founding such an institution and its potentials. They are particularly grateful to the Si Agro Company which donated furniture for a classroom.

The “Red Rose” Festival Held

Source: Rusko Slovo



The Festival of Ruthenian Culture “Red Rose” in Ruski Krstur was held this year for the 55th time. It lasted for two days and five events were held. A solemn concert was held on Sunday, October 2, when amateurs from Krstur bid a farewell from Julijan Ramac Cama, who has recently passed away. The festival opened on Saturday, October 1, when an exhibition of paintings of Andjelka Anticevic, of Berkasovo, that was inspired by the love for her Ruthenian roots, was held. An event for children called “Red Bud”

was held on the same day when there was a competition for the best musical composition and when children folklore ensembles performed. The event called “The Echoes of a Plain” on Saturday evening gathered representatives of almost all places where Ruthenians live in Serbia, Croatia and Slovakia.

Radoslav Pavlovic, an envoy of the Serbian President, welcomed those present. On Sunday, October 2, eleven signers competed for the most beautiful male and female voice at the Red Rose event, and the winners are Kristina Afic and Robert Zahorjanski. An album of Zlatko Ruskovski titled “Only one Look” was presented at the event. A solemn concert titled “In the middle of a Wide Plain” was held where Ruthenian societies performed. Mihalj Njilas, the Provincial Secretary for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities, the Deputy Head of Municipality, Karolj Valka, and the president of the National Council of the



Ruthenians, Slavko Rac, welcomed those present. A special part of the event was dedicated to Julijan Ramac Camo, who gave an immeasur-



able contribution to the Ruthenian culture.

The 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Petro Kuzmjak Marked

The 200th anniversary of the birth of teacher Petro Kuzmjak was marked on Saturday, October 1, in

the Petro Kuzmjak Elementary and Secondary School in Krstur. One street in Krstur is also named after him as well as a Ruthenian cultural and artistic society in Novo Orahovo. The Krstur School and the National Council of Ruthenians organized a roundtable dedicated to Petro Kuzmjak. Guests from Slovakia, from a secondary school in Popradu in Slovakia and from Stranjani, the birth place of teacher Kuzmjak, also took part in the roundtable. School director Vasilij Kuzmjak and the president of the National Council’s Committee on Education, Melanija Rimar, laid flowers at a bust of Petro Kuzmjak in front of the school, and school pedagogue Ljubica Njaradi welcomed the guests and opened an exhibition in the hall of the school where students of the second year of the Gymnasium in Ruthenian performed a short program. School director Vasilij Kuzmjak and the head of Stranjani municipality, Vjerka Kravcakova, thanked for the invitation to attend the ceremony. The director of the school from Poprad showed a video and photographs dedicated to Kuzmjak’s birthplace, the village of Stranjani, and recalled his mother’s memories of her cousin, teacher Kuzmjak. Guests from Poprad, Humeni, Stara Ljubovnja, members of the National Council of Ruthenians, MP Olena Papuga, priests and other guests attended the ceremony.



A Parliamentary Delegation of the Czech Republic Paid a Visit to the National Council of Czechs

Source: www.ebelackrva.rs

Representatives of the Parliament of the Czech Republic and the Czech Embassy in Belgrade paid a visit to Bela Crkva, met with members of the National Council of Czechs, the leadership of the municipality, and members of the Ceske Besede Bele Crkve, Cesko Selo and Kruscica.

- We had an opportunity to see how our compatriots fit well here and nonetheless they managed to preserve their language and culture. Even though our hosts today are Serbs, they are Czechs also, and this is good, since the cooperation can be improved through this form of dual identity, said Zuzka Bebarova Rubjrova, the president of the Czech Parliament's Petitions Committee.

- This visit is a great honour for our municipality. We spoke about assistance this local government is providing to national minorities, including the Czech minority, and what else we can do for them. In addition to a radio show, TV shows on local and regional cable TV, premises for the seat of the National Council, we also discussed what else could be done in the future. We dis-

cussed projects that were implemented in cooperation with the Embassy and the Czech Republic, and they are the greatest investments of a foreign country in our municipality. We are particularly grateful for a donation of three buses and of course for the construction of a sewerage network in Kruscica, said Darko Bogosavljevic, the Head of Bela Crkva Municipality.

Small, but Important Step

Source: Hrvatska Rijec

At the beginning of October, a show in Croatian which is broadcast on the Novi Sad Radio, which is a part of the Radio-TV Vojvodina /RTV/, was widened. Instead of half an hour a week, the show is broadcast one hour a week.

These are two shows that last half an hour each, on Saturdays and Tuesdays, at 14:15. They are broadcast on the third program of Radio Novi Sad (RNS3) which is intended for shows in languages of national minorities, on 100.00 MHz. This radio is also broadcast online at www.rts.rs. The Cro-Info of Subotica is in charge of this show. The editor and anchor of the show is Petar Pitaf, of Petrovaradin. Jelena Tumbas, editor of a program in Croatian on RTV, was the editor and anchor of a weekly show that was broadcast on Saturdays. "We continue to deal with events concerning the Croatian community in the Vojvodina, with emphasis on culture," Pitaf said. The show that will be broadcast on Saturdays will



also deal with socio-political and cultural subjects. Daily political subjects will not be dealt with. For the needs of the show, we will use parts of the Motriste show and Zlatna Skatulja show, which are produced by Cro-Info. A show that will be broadcast on Tuesdays will include content of

TV shows in Croatian on RTV. We plan to widen the spectrum of subjects from all areas of life of the Vojvodina Croats," he added. Ivan Usumovic, a member of the Croatian National Council, in charge of information, says that this is a small but important step for improving the Croatian program on Radio Novi Sad.

"This is a significant increase since we are becoming equal with other minorities who are similar to us when it comes to numbers. This has been a request of the Croatian National Council for years. The second good thing is that we have better time of broadcasting and we are more 'visible' to other national communities in the Vojvodina," Ivan Usumovic has said.



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.