

**The International  
Day of the  
Mother Tongue  
Marked**

**Second Report  
on the Implementation of the  
Activities Envisaged by the  
Minority Action Plan Presented**

# **33 Minority News**

february 2017



## **Chapter 26 on Education and Culture Opened**

**Vršac School „Mladost“  
Introduced Romanian  
Language with the Elements  
of Romanian Culture in the  
Curriculum**

**Slovenian Society  
„Kredarica“  
Celebrated its  
Twentieth  
Anniversary**

# HIGHLIGHT



## Second Report on the Implementation of the Activities Envisaged by the Minority Action Plan Presented

In her opening remarks in the meeting presenting the Second Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Execution of National Minority Rights for the Third and the Fourth Quarter of 2016, director of the Government Office for Human and Minority Rights, dr Suzana Paunović, noted that the implementation of the activities arising from the Action Plan for the Execution of National Minority Rights has been regularly monitored.



## Chapter 26 Opened

In the process of negotiations for the accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union, the Chapter 26 on the education and culture was opened and temporarily closed in the Intergovernmental Conference in Brussels on February 27.



## National Minorities Have Been Deprived the Right to Be Represented in the REM Council

On February 8, the Coordination of the National Minority Councils sent a protest letter to the state institutions, since the National Parliament did not act as provided by the law and did not take any steps to enable the national minority councils to propose their candidate for membership in the Council of the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media.



## Two Decaded of the Slovenian Society „Kredarica“

At the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad, on February 8, the Slovenian Society „Kredarica“ formally marked its twentieth anniversary. The main objective of the Society's work is to develop and deepen the relations with the Slovenians living in Novi Sad, Vojvodina, Serbia, Slovenia, etc. Furthermore, the Society aims to nurture and develop the Slovenian culture and language and inform its members on the developments in Slovenia.

# EDITORIAL 33

## 35 Steps to Europe

*A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step* – reads one of many Chinese proverbs. Our journey to the European Union, too, begins with a single step, and we hope that the last, 35th step we will take will be a confirmation that we have mastered the journey of changes and fulfilled assignments given to us with high marks.

The first steps, i.e. the first chapters were opened in December 2015, two years after the accession negotiations with the European union had begun. A new phase in the EU integration was marked by opening of the Chapters 32 and 35, regulating financial control and normalization of relations between Belgrade and Priština.

Two essential chapters - 23 i 24 – governing judiciary and fundamental rights and justice, freedom and security, were opened in July 2016. In December of the same year, Serbia opened Chapters 5 and 25 regulating public procurement and science and research. This year, on February 27, the next two chapters – 20 and 26 - were opened, dealing with enterprise and industrial policy and education and culture. It was the Chapter 26 that was the subject to dispute in December 2016, when the Republic of Croatia blocked its opening. Let us remind ourselves that Croatia insisted at the time that issues linked with the Croatian minority in Serbia and return of cultural artefacts also be included in the negotiations. A few of the complaints referred to the lack of textbooks in national minority languages. Signing of the Anex to the Memorandum on Preparation and Printing of the Lacking Textbook for the School Year 2017/2018 has contributed greatly (or should contribute) to finding solution to the aforementioned problem. For some minorities, the preparation and the printing of the textbooks are in progress, for others they have not begun yet. The reasons behind these differences are unknown. For instance, in the case of the Bosniak national minority, in addition to 229 elementary and high school textbooks that are already used by students, there are 52 textbooks that are still lacking. Although they are listed in the Memorandum, not a single textbook from this lot has been printed. Who - if anyone - will be held accountable for this delay? It is unknown, too.

Step by step, chapter by chapter – it seems that we are closer to our goal, but, on a second look, it is clear that the situation is far from perfect. We are yet to solve the problems in a systematic way, and, whenever it is possible, we tend to sweep problems under the carpet. And when we stumble over them, we will blame everyone else for it.

## 30 different national minorities live in Serbia



# Chapter 26 Opened

Source: Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development

**I**n the process of negotiations for the accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union, the Chapter 26 on the education and culture was opened and temporarily closed in the Intergovernmental Conference in Brussels on February 27.

The Chapter 26 does not entail a specific assessment and does not require a special action plan. The Negotiating Position of the Republic of Serbia envisages activities in regard to the further harmonization of the legislative and institutional framework with legal achievements and standards of the EU in the areas of education, youth, sports, and culture.

In the area of education, it is envisaged to carry out amendments to the legislative framework with the objective to achieve the strategic goals of Serbia and the package of objectives of the „Europe 2020 Strategy“ and the „Education and Training 2020“, which will enable overall enhancement of quality of education on all levels and ensure strengthening of the capacity to participate in the EU programs.

In pre-school education, the emphasis will be put on creation of a comprehensive legislative framework to achieve quality and accessibility of the pre-school education, through amendments of the Law on the Basis of the Education System

and the Law on Pre-School Education, and the increased number of children covered by the pre-school education.

In the area of elementary education, the objective is to reduce attrition and inten-

sify work on the upbringing role of school in the elementary education, which will contribute to the comprehensive development of the student's personality, students' participation in the learning process, encouragement to assume responsibility, and strengthening of the motivation for learning and intellectual work.

In the area of secondary education, there are plans to change the enrollment policy



**Johannes Hahn** ✓  
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Glad to open two more chapters with #Serbia. #EU perspective is firm and real. #Reforms will benefit young people and business.

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and define a new network of schools and educational profiles, as well as to introduce general, vocational, and artistic final exams as a method for enrollment in the higher education.

In the area of higher education, the objective is to have at least 35% of the 30-34 years old population in Serbia with a higher education degree after 2020. To this end, there are plans to amend the legislative framework and introduce a just financing system that will be based on student's results.

In the area of adult education, it is expected that the number of accredited institutions and programs will increase further.

Establishment of the system of the National Qualification Framework (NOK) shall be facilitated by ratification of a Law on the National Qualification Network, and the NOK reference process in line with the European Qualification Network shall commence in the nearest future.



# Paunović: Implementation of the Minority Action Plan Regularly Monitored

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights

**I**n her opening remarks in a meeting presenting the Second Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Execution of the Rights of National Minorities for the 3rd and 4th quarter of 2016, Director of the Government Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, emphasized that the implementation of the Minority Action Plan is regularly monitored.



Paunović assessed that a clear picture of the performance by individual executors and their contribution to overall implementation of envisaged activities is being created.

As she noted, 67% of activities due in this reporting period have been completed or are being successfully implemented.

Paunović reminded that, in November and December 2016, the Office had organized trainings for individuals assigned to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan and their deputies (total of 63 individuals), with the support of IPA

2012 Twining Project. A special training had also been organized for representatives of the national minority councils who participate in the reporting.

In the coming period, the Office shall focus its efforts on further enhancement of the Action Plan monitoring system, Paunović concluded, and noted that the Office will continue to provide support to all individuals taking part in the reporting process in order to improve their work and mutual cooperation.

Speaking about the previous reporting cycle and the availability of this important document, Paunović noted that the

First Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan was translated to 11 national minority languages, which are, in addition to the Serbian language, in official use in the Republic of Serbia: Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Macedonian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovakian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Czech languages. The Office for Human and Minority Rights is also translating the First Report to English.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the state bodies and institutions, international organizations, civil society organizations, national minority councils, and media.

# Implemented Minority Action Plan Activities

The second reporting cycle was carried out from November 14, 2016 through January 30, 2017. As per the data provided by the Office for Human and Minority Rights, of 70 executors, 57 submitted their reports. The executors who failed to report on their activities are: local self-government units, councils for interethnic relations, media, National Library of Serbia, seven national minority councils, and Press Council. By the end of the fourth quarter of 2016, a total of 84 activities envisaged by the National Minority Action Plan should have been implemented. The executors also reported on six activities that have been implemented before the time line envisaged by the Action Plan.

The following activities have been implemented:

- Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities.
- Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government, the Ombudsman, and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – Office in the Republic of Serbia.
- International Human Right Day marked, an exhibition of national minorities organized under the title “United Mosaic of Serbia”.
- Seventh coordination meeting of representatives of the relevant state institutions and civil society organizations on establishment of mechanisms for prevention of hate crimes in the Republic of Serbia.
- Ministry of Culture and Information (co-financing of public information projects in national minority languages) supported 15 multi-lingual projects in 2016, which are implemented in Serbian and in one or more national minority languages.
- Standards for Serbian language as a second language adopted by National Educational Council on November 15, 2016.
- Law on Autonomous Province and

Local Self Government Employees, which came into force on December 1, 2016.

- Regulation on criteria for job classification and job description criteria in autonomous provinces and local self governments.
- Regulation on internal and public competition for employment in autonomous provinces and local self governments.
- Rulebook on criteria of assessment of expertise, competence and ethical eligibility for selection of judges for permanent appointment in a secondary or higher court and on criteria for proposing candidates for court presiding judges.
- Rulebook on criteria for assessment of expertise, competence and ethical eligibility of candidates for first-time judges, including a provision that, in selection of candidates for judges and court presiding judges, special attention will be given to the ethnic composition of the population, adequate representation of the national minority candidates, knowledge of expert legal terminology in national minority languages in official use in the court.
- Workshop on the national minorities’ accessibility to legal aid with participation of relevant state institutions, national minority councils, civil society organizations, and international organizations.
- Round table on adoption of final recommendations for Component 3, Objective 1 IPA 2013 project „Strengthening of the Capacity of the High Judicial Council and State Prosecutors Council”, in regard to the national minorities’ accessibility to the judicial system.
- Training of future coaches among higher courts judges from all four appellate territories on non-discriminatory measures completed.
- First meeting of the new Special Working Group for Changes and Amendments to the Law on National Minority Councils was held on December 28, 2016

- Training for national minority councils

- On November 9, 2016, the Government made a Decision on Changes to the Decision on Establishment of the Republic National Minority Council

## Identified Delays

### *Personal Statutory Position:*

- Amendments to the Law on Civil Registry
- Training for the local self-government units on the Special Voters Registry and protection of personal data

### *Education:*

- Changes in the legislative framework and models of education in national minority languages
- Democratic participation
- Changes in the regulatory framework
- Adequate representation of members of national minorities in the public sector and public companies
- Promotional events for basic police training

### *Economic Position of National Minorities:*

- Full implementation of the Action Plan for Implementation of the New Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia 2016-2025

### *International Cooperation*

- Work of inter-state commission and reporting on implementation of bilateral agreements

## Following Steps

- Preparation of report on the implementation of the AP for the first quarter of 2017
- AP planning, monitoring, and reporting support program
- Cooperation with the local self-government units and the civil society
- Support to the work of the Council

# More Than 30 Ethnic Communities Who speak Different Languages Live in Serbia

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights

**N**ot only does an existence of a high number of different mother tongues show that a society is diverse and multilingual, but it also develops awareness about linguistic and cultural traditions and inspires solidarity based on understanding, dialogue, and tolerance", Paunović said on the occasion of the International Mother Tongue Day.

As Paunović noted, the state confirmed its commitment to contributing to the protection and preservation of the multicultural and multilingual Serbia and Europe in 2005, when Belgrade ratified the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages. By ratifying the Charter, Serbia assumed specific responsibilities for 10 national minority languages. More than 30 ethnic communities who speak different languages live in our country, Paunović added.

„By its legislation and by implementation

of specific measures, as provided by the Charter, Serbia has ensured that the minority languages are used in education and media, as well as in courts, public administration, in economic and social life, in cultural activities and cross-border exchange", Paunović assessed.

Paunović reminded that, in the previous school year, the overall education in national minority languages in elementary schools was organized on all levels in eight languages (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak, and Croatian) for about 72, 000 children.

As she said, the right to be informed in minority languages through printed and electronic media is implemented in 15 languages, and she particularly noted the importance of a mother tongue being used in the media.

“Eleven minority languages and alphabets have been introduced in official use

in forty-two local self-government units in Serbia. This shows that the Government is genuinely committed to promoting and protecting the minority languages in Serbia in a consistent and thorough way. We shall continue this work in the coming period with help and full cooperation with the national minority councils", Paunović concluded.

The Office's Director noted that further progress in this regard will be more evident after full implementation of the Minority Action Plan, ratified by the Government of the Republic of Serbia in March 2016.

UNESCO General Assembly declared February 21 the International Mother Tongue Day in 1999, in remembrance of the students who were killed in Dhaka, East Pakistan, presently Bangladesh, on February 21, 1952, as they were protesting because their mother tongue had not been declared as an official language.

## The Mother Tongue Day in Ivanovo

Source: RTV

**P**ančevo residents marked the International Mother Tongue Day in Ivanovo, a village where the celebration of this holiday had started for the first time in Serbia ten years ago. Children of different ethnicity from Pančevo elementary schools participated in the recital organized on this occasion in „Žarko Zrenjanin“ Cultural Centre.

This year, too, under the roof of the cultural centre in Ivanovo you could hear songs and poetry in 15 different languages performed by the children from Pančevo elementary schools and their guests from Smederevo.

„This year, we have program in 11 languages. We also have Chinese and Czech performers who participate for the first time in the Mother Tongue Day. We have poetry, songs, orchestra“, Marko Guran, Director of „Žarko Zren-

janin“ Cultural Centre said.

Ivanovo population consists mainly of Hungarians and Banat Bulgarians, „Palchens“,



MEĐUNARODNI DAN  
MATERNJEG JEZIKA

only 300 of them. Nevertheless, they cherish their tradition and language.

„By working in our Cultural Artistic Society, i.e. Association of Banat Bulgarian, and in numerous activities of the school and the Cultural Centre, we try to preserve this language, which is slightly different from

the literary Bulgarian“, Augustin Kalapiš, member of the Association of Banat Bulgarians, said.

The International Mother Tongue Day celebration started in this same location for the first time in Serbia a decade ago, on the initiative of the Euro-regional Centre for Development of Society in Multi-ethnic Communities, „In mediasres“ from Pančevo.

There have been many results since. In 2008, the Statute of the City of Pančevo was changed to introduce the language and the alphabet in a number of local communities and the results are visible everywhere“, Valentin Mik, the president of the „In mediasres“ NGO said.

The guests at the event included the representatives of the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria, Hungarian National Minority Council, and local authorities.



# Debate on Information in Minority Languages Organized in Novi Sad

Source: Autonomija

**P**articipants in the debate “Information in Minority Languages in light of the EU Integrations – Chapter 23”, which was organized in Novi Sad on February 28, concluded that this issue has been unjustly neglected in the processes of the EU integrations and media reforms in Serbia.

The participants in this consultative meeting found the fact that the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Minority Rights „does not tackle the concept of the freedom of the media, position of journalists and independent editorial policies“ as particularly discouraging.

It was also pointed out that financial sustainability is one of the most serious problems the minority media face and that there is no “visible mechanism for financing of the information in the national minorities’ languages”.

The participants in the meeting stated that public services must start observing the law in their work. The Serbian Radio Television (RTS) was particularly noted in this regard, as they failed to include the contents targeting national minorities in their programs, despite the clear provisions in this regard in the Law on the Information Public Services.

“It is not sufficient to have such contents included quantitatively, it is important to have contents of adequate quality as well”, media expert Žužana Serenčes, said.

The participants warned that there was no mechanism that would protect the independence of the editorial policy in the minority media founded by the national minority councils and that solutions in this regard should be looked for both in the legislation and the self-regulation.

“It is of the utmost importance to achieve



a pluralism in the minority media and not to allow the national minority councils to control the minority information process as a whole”, the president of the Independent Journalist Association of Vojvodina, Nedim Sejdinović said.

The participants agreed that all these issues should be addressed in the ratification of a new Media Strategy, as envis-

He added that it is necessary to include representatives of civil society and journalist and media associations in this process.

The participants in the meeting included representatives of the non-governmental organizations, minority media, national minority councils, as well as the Office for Human and Minority Rights, the Office of the Ombudsman, the National Convent for EU and the Serbian Negotiating Team for Chapter 10.

Serbian legislative framework provides good foundation for media pluralism in the minority media, and this is something we should take advantage of, Ljiljana Breberina, advisor in the Media Department of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, said.

She noted that the legislation envisages four formats of the organization of the minority media – public services, private media, media founded

by the national minority councils or foundations, and civil society media.

“Civil society media are the least used model nowadays, but it is one of the future responses to the challenges in the minority information and survival for the minority media pluralism”, Ljiljana Breberina said.

aged by the Action Plan for Chapter 23, as well as by other action plans.

“When we look at reports on implementation of an action plan, they all appear to be great at first glance, but, quite often, they do not represent reality at all”, Sejdinović said.



The President of the National Minority Council of the Slovak National Minority, Ana Tomanova Makanova, warned that the national minority councils cannot participate fully in Serbia's EU accession process, since, out of 115 program activities envisaged by the Action Plan for Implementation of the National Minority Rights, the national minority councils can comment and report on 20 activities only.

"The problem is even more severe in regard to the information activities, as, out of nine activities, we can report on only two of them", Ana Tomanova Makanova said.

She objected to the national minority councils' unawareness of the Special Rule Book for the National Minority Councils on their role in providing comments on the project proposals received under the calls for proposals issued by the Min-

istry of Culture and Information, and was very critical of the fact that "the national minority councils learned that a national minority representative had been appointed as a member of the REM from the Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan, long after this process had already been completed".

Head of the Department for the National Minority Rights in the Office of the Ombudsman, Violeta Ćorić, said that the media privatization process "had to result in the closure of a number of minority and majority media outlets", but, for the time being, there is a critical need for a "qualitative analysis of the programs of the media that have survived".

Media expert Žužana Serenčeš reminded that, in the aftermath of the privatization of the media, one fourth of the programs in the minority lan-

guages ceased to exist, and three areas of problems have been identified since – „financial stability and sustainability“, „information level and its span“, and „quality of information in the minority languages“.

The Chairman of the Independent Journalist Association of Vojvodina, Nedim Sejdinović, warned that the minority information has been facing a number of contradictory and paradoxical processes, such as cofinancing of media contents of public interest by open calls for proposals and a delay in the ratification of a new Media Strategy that should tackle the work of the minority media as well.

The consultative meeting was organized by the Vojvodina Initiative for EU, which consists of a number of non-governmental organizations.

# Less Staff, the Same Level of Contents in Minority Languages

Source: Neighborly News

**F**ollowing privatization, 21 of 28 multilingual media outlets that participated in the poll have continued to produce contents in national minority languages on the same level, two outlets have increased the number of contents, three have reduced this number, whereas two outlets have fully ceased reporting in the minority languages, the results of the Neighborly News Site poll have shown.

As the research results indicated, the number of staff has not changed in 9 of the 28 multilingual media outlets polled. After they had been privatized, 15 media outlets reduced the number of staff, while 4 media outlets increased the number of employees.

Of 43 multilingual media outlets privatized in 2015, 29 outlets have continued to work, whereas 14 have been closed.

In 2015 - the year of privatization - 12 multilingual media outlets were closed, 19 were sold, and 12 outlets were given a chance to survive by transferring capital to the employees. Of this number, two additional outlets were closed in 2016,

Information Center Novi Kneževac, which had been sold originally, and RTV Bačka Palanka, which had been initially privatized by transferring capital to the staff.



The Neighborly News research analyzed 28 of the 29 minority media that continued to work after they had been privatized. RTV Pančevo is the only multilingual media outlet that failed to provide any data.

All media outlets privatized by the sale of capital took part in open media competitions in 2016, whereas, a number of media outlets privatized by the transfer of capital to their staff could not participate or had problems responding to the calls for project proposals issued by the

state on all government levels due to delayed completion of the privatization procedures.

According to the data received from the local self governments, in 2016, Dimitrovgrad, Kovačica, Bujanovac, Subotica, and Novi Sad allocated highest amounts of funds to the projects in the national minority languages, 11.2 million dinars, 7.57 million dinars, 6.63 million dinars, 6.35 million dinars, and 6 million dinars, respectively.

The Neighborly News site looked into how the multilingual media outlets privatized in 2015 operate nowadays as part of the project „Mapping of the multilingual media after the privatization: Impact of the media reform on the position, media contents and sustainability of the minority media“.

The project's objective was to determine the number, types of contents, and length of programs in the national minority languages in the multilingual media before and after the privatization, the number of journalists and other media staff, as well as whether these outlets participated in any media competitions in 2016.



# Meeting of the Coordination Held

Source: Bosnian National Council



**O**n February 4, the Coordination of the National Minority Councils held a plenary session in Belgrade to discuss the work of this body in the coming months.

The Coordination representatives, who participated in the January 31 meeting with the Minister of the Public Administration and the Local Self Government, Ana Brnabić, submitted their report.

The Coordination ratified the Rules of Procedures and formed its expert working bodies that will take part in the monitoring and implementation of the Minority Action Plan and preparation of session of the Republic National Minority Council.

## National Minorities Have Been Deprived from Having Their Representatives in the Council of RAEM

**O**n February 8, the Coordination of the National Minority Councils submitted a letter of protest to the state institutions, in light of the fact that the National Assembly failed to act as provided by the Law and did not take any steps to enable the national minority councils nominate their candidate for the Council of the Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media (RAEM).

The Law on Electronic Media provides that the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia shall elect members of the Council of the RAEM exclusively based on the recommendation of authorized nominators, the national minority councils included.

On February 7, the Parliamentary Committee for Culture and Information endorsed the list of candidates that did not include a joint candidate nominated by the national minor-

ity councils. The letters of protest were submitted to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government, the Ministry of Culture and Information, and the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

The Coordination of the National Minority Councils requested the aforementioned state institutions to enable the national minority councils to execute their rights as provided by the Law.

## National Minorities in the Programs of the Council of Europe and the European Union

**O**n February 9, members of the Coordination of the National Minority Councils met with representatives of the Horizontal Facility Program – a joint project of the Council of Europe and the European Union.

Adina Nichifor, senior project manager of the Council of Europe, presented the Program component dealing with anti-discrimination and protection of vulnerable groups related to the national minorities in Serbia.

The participants in the meeting also discussed education in national minority languages in Serbia, use of national minority languages in public administration and in courts, as well as an overall awareness about the national minorities and importance of their rights in Serbia.

Program “Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey” is a project that aims to help the countries in the region in the process of EU integration.

The program was launched in May 2016, and will be implemented until mid 2019.

The Coordination of the National Minority Councils was represented in the meeting by its Chairman, dr. Sulejman Ugljanin, the President of the Association of Jewish Municipalities, dr. Ruben Fuks, and the President of the Roma National Minority Council, Vitomir Mihajlović.

# 245 Million Dinars Allocated for the National Minority Councils

Source: Office of Human and Minority Rights

**I**n a meeting held at the Palace of Serbia, Director of the Government office of Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, noted that 245 million dinars have been allocated in the budget of the Republic of Serbia for financing of the national minority councils in 2017.

„In the Budget of the Republic of Serbia, almost 110 million dinars have been allocated for the work of the three largest national minority councils – the Hungarian National Minority Council (59.5 million dinars), the Roma National Minority Council (22.1 million dinars) and the Bo-

snjak National Minority Council (27.8 million dinars). Remaining 135 million dinars have been distributed among other 18 national minority councils“, Paunović said.

„Today's meeting is part of the transparent procedures observed by the Office in regard to the distribution of funds for the work of the national minority councils“, Paunović noted. As she said, the Office has distributed the funds for 2017 as provided by the Law on the National Minority Councils and the Decision on the Procedures for Distribution of Funds from the Budget of the Republic of Serbia

for Financing of the Work of the National Minority Councils.

Paunović reminded the representatives of the national minority councils of their responsibility to file financial reports to enable monitoring of whether the budgetary funds have been spent in compliance with the law.

In addition to the representatives of the national minority councils, the representatives of the state institutions and the OSCE Mission to Serbia also attended the meeting.

## Slovenian Community

# Two Decades of the Slovenian Society "Kredarica"

Source: RTV

**O**n February 8, the Slovenian Society „Kredarica“ marked its twentieth anniversary at the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad.

The Slovenian Society "Kredarica" was founded in early 1997 as the first society of the kind in the territories of the former common state. The main goal of its work is to develop and enhance relations between Slovenians in Novi Sad, Vojvodina, Serbia, Slovenia, etc. Furthermore, the Society's objective is to help sustain and develop Slovenian culture and language and keep its members up to date with the developments in Slovenia.

The president of „Kredarica“, Ivan Zavrtnik, noted that the Society carries out most of its activities by organizing language classes, cultural and artistic events and participation of its members in meetings organized in Slovenia. He also emphasized that many of the Society's projects and activities have been funded for years by the City Cultural Directorate of Novi Sad.

The event was opened by the Slovenian



and Serbian anthems. The piano duet „Ingmar“ performed during the program.

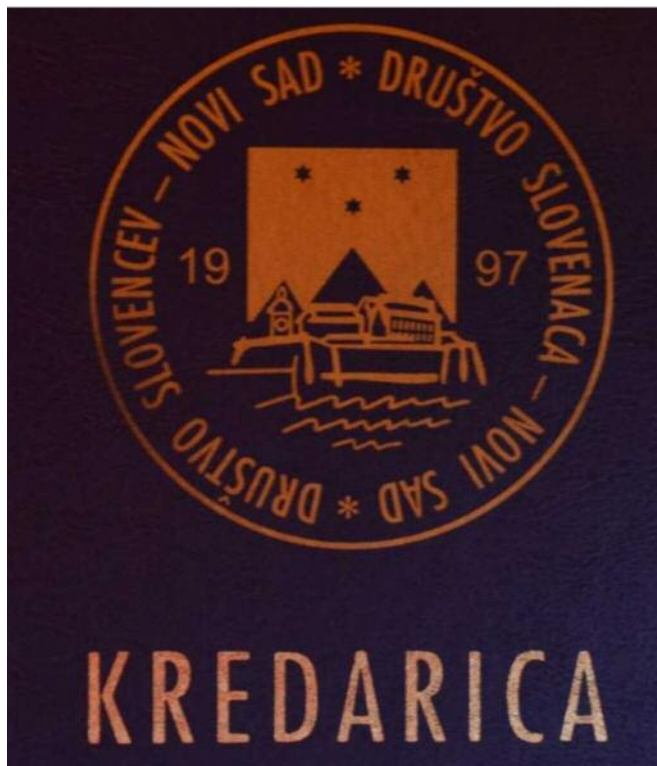
The Honorary Consul of the Republic

of Slovenia in Vojvodina, Rajko Marić, the President of the National Minority Council of the Slovenian Minority in Serbia, Saša Verbič, and the Minister for Slovenian Diaspora in the Govern-

ment of the Republic of Slovenia, Gorazd Žmavc, addressed the audience. The Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia, Vladimir Gasparič, and Belgrade Archbishop, Stanislav Hočevar, attended the event.

The Mayor of Novi Sad, Miloš Vučević, who also took part in the celebration, said:

"I congratulate to „Kredarica" who, two decades ago, started a pioneering work under the most difficult social and political circumstances in the late nineties, and has, over time, achieved today's success. By building our friendship, we have jointly achieved a great honor for our city of Novi Sad, which has been promoted into the European Capital of Culture for 2021, as the city that nurtures multiculturality, which is one the greatest



European values. We are friends, associates, and partners who have, for

many years, worked together to attract Slovenian investors and tourists to Novi Sad. We use our good example to show everybody what the bilateral agreements between our countries truly mean, i.e. how they can improve the quality of life of our citizens. We particularly cherish the friendship with the City of Maribor, who were the first to support us in the race for the title of the European Capital of Culture. We are also brought together by the fact that we are both Danube region cities. We are yet to show what we can achieve together to make Novi Sad even better, with our friends from "Kredarica", Mayor Miloš Vučević said and extended his congratulation to all members of the Society.

During the recital, a documentary movie „Slovenian Society Kredarica in Novi Sad – First Twenty Years“, directed by Maja Grgić, was also screened.

## Romanian Community

# For the First Time, Romanian Language as an Elective Subject

Source: RTV



On February 6, the "Mladost" Elementary School formally launched the Romanian language with elements of national culture as an elective subject. There are currently 42 pupils from the first to the eighth grade from all Vršac schools enrolled in this course.

The subject does not aspire to provide the pupils with the level of mother tongue proficiency as a schooling in the Romanian language would. It aims at enabling the non-speakers to understand and use the language and correcting the language skills of the pupils who use the Banat dialect.

"I am from Straže village and can speak Romanian the way my fellow villagers do, however I cannot speak it correctly and would like to learn it, David Bićanin, third grade pupil of the "Vuk Karadžić" Elementary School said.

"I would like very much if he could learn to speak Romanian grammatically cor-

rect, and I appreciate greatly this opportunity", Marija Bićanin, David's mother said.

Although it also aims at preservation of the Romanian culture, this elective course is open to all pupils interested in learning the language, regardless of their ethnic background or the school they attend. To this end, various age and levels of language skills will represent a major challenge to the language teachers.

"The Romanian language will be taught from the very basics, and the course will include the elements of tradition and excursions to Timisoara", Marinik Mozor, teacher of Romanian language and literature said.

"At the moment, we have 42 pupils. I am positive that we will have more pupils as of September and that interest in the Romanian Language as an elective course will be higher", Tatjana Jašin Mojs, the principal of the "Mladost" Ele-

mentary School said.

The "Mladost" Elementary School is the first school in Serbia that introduced the Romanian Language with Elements of National Culture as an elective subject.

"The school Principal and the local self-government contributed greatly to this achievement. We invested a lot of effort, which was fully supported by the local self-government", Marijana Golomejić, a member of the City Council for Education said.

In their first class, the pupils had an opportunity to get acquainted with the teacher and the subject, while members of the "Mihaj Eminescu" Cultural Society from Kuštilj read poetry to the children in the Romanian literary language.

In the coming period, it is expected that "Vuk Karadžić" and "Paja Jovanović" elementary schools shall launch Hungarian and Roma language courses following the same model.



# Bunjevci Community Marks Their National Holidays – The Great Gathering Day and the Foundation Day of the First National Minority Council

Source: Bunjevci



In February 2, the Bunjevci Community marked one of the four national holidays, the Great Gathering Day at the "Spartak" Restaurant in Subotica. It was an opportunity for the attendees to remember, once again, the first public Great Gathering held in 1879, and to show that Bunjevci still cherish their unique customs and are strongly committed to their ethnic affiliation.

The recital started by the performance of the amateur drama group of the Cultural and Artistic Society „Bunjevka“, who presented a part of the play „The Land of Our Great-Grandfathers, and then the audience could learn more about why the Gathering is such an important event for Bunjevci, as well as of the support this community receives on all levels – in the local self governments, in the AP Vojvodina and in the Republic of Serbia.

Acting as the host of the event, dr Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić, the president of the Bunjevci National Minority Council, expressed her pleasure over continued preservation of the community's tradition:

– It is very nice that even today, after so many years, we have not forgotten who we are. Although we do not wear our traditional costumes in such big numbers as it was the case in 1879, when Bunjevci organized their first mass public gathering and showed everyone who they are, it is important that we keep our tradition. The Gathering is a holiday of joy and socializing, sometimes with your family and your neighbours, and today with your friends, with your fellow citizens, with all Bunjevci. We have not forgotten our customs, and the best of all is that, today, we are here together!

Bogdan Laban, the Mayor of Subotica, extended his congratulation on the National Holiday to Bunjevci. He expressed his satisfaction over being able to participate in the celebration and added that the local self government provided assistance to Bunjevci as well as to other national minority communities, which will continue in the future, as well.

Mihalj Njilaš, Provincial Secretary for Education, Legislation, Administration and National Minorities and Deputy Prime Minister of the AP Vojvodina Government, commended on

the Bunjevci efforts to preserve the community's identity.

– Bunjevci national minority is numerous and well organized, and, for us in the Provincial Government, it is important that, as such, it also marks its holidays in a proper way. This is a beautiful holiday and I am happy to be here. I also wish that this year will be much better for all national minority councils, including the Bunjevci Council, as there is enough potential for such a progress.

The President of the Republic, Tomislav Nikolić sent a message to the attendees through his special envoy Nedeljko Tenjović, who said:

– I bring you the best wishes of the President of the Republic of Serbia, to celebrate your

The celebration was, at the same time, the 17th meeting of the Council, which had a ceremonial character, with an agenda that included the greetings of the guests, the annual report for 2016 presented by the President of the NMC, and that award presenting ceremony to the distinguished community members and organizations.

Timea Horvat, Deputy Mayor of the City of Subotica, greeted all guests and congratulated the national holiday to Bunjevci community, and Milica Rodić addressed the attendees on behalf of the OSCE Mission in Serbia.

Dr Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić, the President of the Bunjevci National Minority Council, presented the report on the work in the previous period, with special emphasis on education,



holiday in joy as well as his best regards in remembrance of 1879, when thousands of Bunjevci gathered in their national costumes in public to show the existence of their community, which they have succeeded in preserving working for the future with the lessons they learned in the past

As it is the custom of the event, the jury declared the best song. The jury, consisting of Ana Popov, Tamara Babić i Nevenka Bašić Palković, selected the song "The Gathering Is Our Treasure" by Gabrijele Diklić as the best song for 2017. Also, the jury traditionally selected the most beautiful girl of the Gathering. Among twelve gorgeous young girls, Aleksandra Vuković was selected as the most beautiful one.

On February 24, the Foundation Day of the First Bunjevci National Minority Council was marked in the Blue Room of the Subotica City Hall.

where the most significant progress has been made.

The award ceremony followed; jubilee awards were given to the CAS „Aleksandrovo“ (40th anniversary) and CAS „Bunjevka“ (20th anniversary), as well as to the societies' presidents, Tihomir Vrbanić and Kata Kuntić, after which, three newly-established diplomas were awarded.

The „Blaško Rajić“ Award for contribution to the development of institutions and preservation of the Bunjevci national identity was given to dr Andrija Peić. The same Award was posthumously given to the distinguished work of Đura Bošnjak, and the Award was received by his son Aleksandar. The award named after Ambrozije Šarčević, which is given for special contribution in the scientific-research work, was granted to dr Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić.

# Delegation of the National Council of Roma National Minority Visits UNICEF Office

Source: National Council of Roma National Minority

**O**n Thursday, February 2, 2017, a delegation of the National Council of the Roma National Minority, consisting of the Deputy President, Živojin Mitrović, and a member of the Project Team, Milorad Popović, paid a visit to the UNICEF Office in Belgrade with the objective to promote cooperation, active participation, and inclusion of the Roma community in the society and the institutions of the Republic of Serbia.

In open conversation with Mr. Michel Saint-Lot, the UNICEF Representative in the Republic of Serbia, the delegation tackled issues directly linked to the Strategy for Improved Position of Roma Men and Women, and education of Roma children and students, in particular. The Deputy President of the Roma



National Minority Council, Živojin Mitrović, presented the objectives of a newly formed team of young people committed to positioning the Roma national community on both local and national level as successfully as possible. The UNI-

CEF Representative, Michel Saint-Lot, gave his view of the problems of the Roma community in Serbia and noted that these problems should be dealt with in a more efficient way through the institutions, and by a joint engagement in implementation of new ideas and projects.

The interlocutors acknowledged the benefits of the existing cooperation and welcomed the initiative made by the representatives of the National Minority Council for enhanced cooperation and active participation in the implementation of the Roma Strategy. To this end, the first joint activity of the UNICEF and the Roma National Minority Council will tackle the systematization of the positions of the health mediators, pedagogic assistants, and Roma coordinators.

## Rakovica Municipality to Enhance Cooperation with the Roma National Minority Council

**R**epresentatives of the National Minority Council of the Roma National Minority, Deputy President Živojin Mitrović and Secretary General Zoran Kalanjoš, met with the Mayor of the Municipality of Rakovica, Vladan Kocić, and the member of the Municipal Council, Novica Barjaktarović, and discussed the ways to enhance cooperation in the areas of employment, housing, and education.

In the introductory part of the meeting, the Deputy President of the Roma National Minority Council, Živojin Mitrović, briefed the interlocutors on the Strategy for Improved Position of Roma Men and Women and noted the importance of the implementation of this strategic document on a local level. He also informed the Mayor on the Coordination Body for the implementation of the Strategy, which will consist of the senior representatives of the state institutions and

will participate directly in the implementation of the Strategy.

The Secretary General of the National Minority Council, Zoran Kalanjoš, addressed the importance of the work of the recently formed local Council Multicultural Relations in Rakovica. He also noted the importance of earmarking funds in the municipal budget for Roma community local projects as soon as possible.

The Mayor of the Municipality of Rakovica, Vladan Kocić, expressed interest in taking active part in the work of the local Council for Multicultural Relations and noted that he saw no obstacles in earmarking funds in the municipal budget for the projects that aim to improve the position of Roma in the Municipality of Rakovica. The Mayor particularly emphasized that grave social, economic and infrastructural problems Roma community is confronted with in the Municipality of Rakovica can be

solved only if all stakeholders work together.

Member of the Municipal Council in the Municipality of Rakovica, Novica Barjaktarović, noted that the Municipality has succeeded in providing vocational training to a number of Roma in the Vocational High School in Rakovica. He elaborated that 60 individuals have been included in this program thus far, and that additional 40 Roma men and women are to be included in this training. All members of the Roma community residing in the Municipality of Rakovica are eligible for this program. In addition to the provision of the vocational training, the Municipality shall assist all individuals who graduate from this program to find jobs immediately afterwards.

In wrapping up the meeting, the interlocutors agreed to enhance and proliferate communication and cooperation between the Roma National Minority Council and the Municipal Government.



# Provincial Ombudsman Pays a Visit to the Czech National Minority Council

Source: Czech National Minority Council

**O**n February 10, the Provincial Ombudsman, Zoran Pavlović, and his associates paid a visit to the Czech National Minority Council. The delegation also included Eva Vukašinović, the Deputy Ombudsman in charge of protection of national minority rights, with whom the Council successfully cooperated since it was formed. The meeting took place at the Council's offices, and the guests were greeted by the President, Jože Sivaček, and by Štefan Klepaček, Jaroslav Bodnar and Davorin Škornjička.

The Provincial Ombudsman, prof dr. Zoran Pavlović, spent several days paying visits to the national minority councils registered in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Bearing in mind the competencies of the Ombudsman's Office in the sphere of national minority rights protection, the objective of these visits was to learn more about the work of the national minority councils in Vojvodina and look into the prospects of future cooperation.

In the beginning of his tour of duty, the Ombudsman noted three areas this institution will focus its attention on. These areas include non-profit productions for children in the national minority languages, participation of women in the national minority councils, and organization of round table discussions on human and minority rights.

Speaking about the first area of special interest, the interlocutors noted the problem of financing production of printed and electronic contents, since, as provided by the amendments to the Law, the national minority councils cannot apply for funding with the Republic and Provincial institutions. During the conversation, the guests presented a few ideas and proposals how to overcome this problem. A possibility to make children visible in the media, not only as a theme or audience, but also as active participants in creation of the media contents, is an imperative, the Provincial Ombudsman said. He

also added that each national minority community should provide their children with at least one magazine in the mother tongue a year, which would also feature the literary contributions by the children.

The issue of women's participation in the work of the national minority councils had been already addressed in the past during the Ombudsman's earlier visits, and, once again, it was confirmed that the Czech National Minority Council is one the very few well organized national minority councils in this regard.

The Ombudsman announced that a series of round table discussions would be organ-



nority councils, in all four areas of jurisdiction – education, culture, information, and official use of language and alphabet – that have been carried out by the Czech National Minority Council, too.

The interlocutors also looked into the initiatives to amend the Law on National Minority Councils and the Law on Official Use of Language and Alphabet and concluded that it is necessary to submit proposals in this regard in a timely manner.

The Ombudsman presented the idea to found a library with minority languages publications within his Office, which would not be a traditional book fund only, but would also represent a kaleidoscope of minority languages in writing.

The participants in the meeting agreed to submit proposals for continuation and enhance-

ment of the mutual cooperation, assessing that the ongoing cooperation has been most satisfactory. The Provincial Ombudsman noted that his office "extends its hand" to the national minority communities and, within its mandate, stands ready to provide all assistance necessary to the Czech National Minority Councils and all members of the Czech minority living in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.



ized to address the rights of the national minorities and draw attention to an unfavorable attitude of local self governments towards national minorities living in their territories, resulting in a number of problems in communication and total lack of sensibility of the government for minority issues. To this end, the interlocutors emphasized the importance of a full execution of competences vested in the national mi-



# Head of the OSCE Mission Visits Bosniak National Council

Source: Bosniak National Council

**O**n February 1, the Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, H.E. Mr. Andrea Orizio with associates paid a visit to the Bosniak National Council (BNC) and met with the Council's leadership.

Ambassador Orizio was briefed on the competencies and activities of the Bosniak National Council, the national minority legislation, the work of the Coordination of the National Minority Councils, and challenges the BNC faces in its work.



The Council's President Ugljanin noted the problems in implementation of the rule of law principle, legal insecurity, equality before

the law, as well as poor road and communal infrastructure in Sandžak, lack of investments in the Sandžak region, and high unemployment rate.

Ambassador Orizio thanked the BNC leadership for warm reception and emphasized that the OSCE's mission has been to assist Serbia in the reforms process and modernization.

Mr. Andrea Orizio was appointed as the Head of the OSCE Mission in Serbia in October 2016, and the meeting was organized as a part of his first official visit to Novi Pazar.

## It Is Necessary to Change the Way Media Report on Sandžak and Bosniaks

**O**n February 22, a public debate on reporting on Sandžak and Bosniaks by the Serbian media and information in Bosniak language „What Does the News Say? Why Is There No News?“ was organized in the Council's Main Office.

The participants in the debate noted a negative trend in the reporting on Sandžak and Bosniaks by Belgrade media and concluded that it is necessary to change a sensationalist approach in the reporting and broadcast contents of genuine interest to the Bosniaks.

In regard to the information in the Bosniak language, the participants emphasized that it is necessary to establish a minority languages desk in the Serbian Radio-Television in order to address adequately the public interest of providing information to Bosniaks and other national minorities in their languages.



Muhedin Fijuljanin, the BNC Vicepresident in charge of the information portfolio, Nedim Sejdinović, a journalist and the President of the Independent Association of Journalists in Vojvodina, and Medin Halilović, long term correspondent of the Anadolu News Agency, were key note speakers in the discussion.

The debate was one of the events organized to mark February 21 – the International Mother Tongue Day. In addition to this debate, the Bosniak National Council also organized education training courses in Novi Pazar, Tutin i Sjenica, as well as a round table on the official use of minority languages and alphabets.





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

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