

**National Minority
Councils Support
Amendment of the Law
on Public Information**

**Center for Migration
Studies Organized Debate
on Education in National
Minority Languages**

34 Minority News

march 2017



**Petrović:
Through
Differences
We Increase
the Value
of All of Us**

**Roma Inclusion
Support Project
Brought to
Completion**

**Requirements Met for Full
Implementation
of Classes in Bosnian
Language**

HIGHLIGHT



Visible Progress, but Significant Challenges Remain

On March 2, the Center for Migration Studies, with support of the Open Society Foundation, organized a round table discussion on the education in the minority languages in the process of EU integrations. The participants in the round table were also briefed on the Second Report on the Implementation of the Chapter 23 Action Plan.



Roma Inclusion Support Project Brought to Completion

Three-and-a-half year long project for the inclusion of Roma, which was funded by the European Union and implemented by the OSCE Mission to Serbia in cooperation with the Office for Human and Minority Rights, was brought to completion on March 31. Several thousand Roma from over 20 towns and municipalities were direct beneficiaries of this project.



On the Chapter 23 and the Political Situation

On March 10, 2017, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, Davor Ivo Starić, met with the representatives of the Croats in Serbia – the president of the Democratic Union of Croats in Vojvodina and the deputy in the Serbian Parliament, Tomislav Žigmanov, and the president of the Croatian National Council, Slaven Bačić.



Emphasis on the Problems of the Community

From March 27 - 29, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovakia, Lukas Parizek, with his delegation, held a number of meetings with colleagues from the Foreign Ministry of our country, the officials of the AP Vojvodina, and representatives of the Slovak community in Serbia.

EDITORIAL 34

Awakening of a Dreary Spring

The month of March began with slating of the presidential elections, and ended with high expectations of what they will bring about. At this point, we will not write about how the campaign went and how members of the national minority communities were blackmailed by a few political parties. But we should not be really surprised when we see members of the minority communities leave the country for their motherlands, and members of the majority community follow their steps.

Those who remain here, every day use different ways to execute their rights. Do they have them? Yes, on paper. And in reality? Not always. One of the principal minority rights, and one of the principal human rights in general, is the right to be informed in your own language. We have learned that local self governments have an obligation to issue open calls for proposals for co-financing of media projects. It is great news, and, for those who do not swim in our murky socio-political waters, this is a worthy move in line with all European standards and principles. However, the results of these competitions, which are of highest importance for the minority media, are disheartening, sometimes even ridiculous. The sole fact that a municipality with the majority population that belongs to a national minority allocates crumbles for program activities of the minority media and millions for a tabloid speaks enough. If it had not been depressing, it would have been a good joke.

Representatives of the national minority councils have supported the initiative of the Ministry of Culture and Information to amend the Law on Public Information and Media to prescribe a minimum amount that local self government must allocate from their budget for project co-financing of the media. Would anyone suggest and support the initiative to ensure that commissions that evaluate these proposals consist of genuine media experts of strong integrity and not expert-wannabes with political party membership card? It is yet to be seen.

30 different national minorities live in Serbia



Through Differences We Increase the Value of All of Us



The Romanian national minority in Serbia has shared the same problems with the majority community for centuries, and, as friendly nations, we have tried to solve these problems together. Daniel Petrović, the president of the Romanian National Minority Council emphasized this at the very beginning of our conversation.

Every minority in Serbia has something that makes it stand out, what its members are proud of. What can the members of your community be proud of?

I would say that we can be very proud of the fact that we have many young intellectuals graduating from universities in Serbia and in Romania or other European countries. This is something that we, in comparison with other national minorities, can be proud of. I have to note that, since 1934, when the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians and Romania signed the agreement on exchange of teachers, we have had the education in the Romanian language. This has definitely contributed to the overall development of Romanians in all areas. Nowadays we have schools with classes in the

Romanian language, and we also have the Institute for Romanian Culture in Vojvodina. I would like to point out that the Institute has published the Romanian-Serbian Dictionary, and they are, at the moment, preparing the Encyclopedia of the Banat Region. These are serious projects that require the engagement of other experts, not only those from the Romanian community, and, to this end, we have an outstanding cooperation with four academies of science: the Serbian Academy of Science, particularly with its Balkans Institute, with the Romanian Academy of Science, the Croatian Academy of Science, and the Montenegrin Academy of Science. We have worked together on many joint projects and we are very pleased that funds have been secured for these purposes. Creating an in-

stitution such as the Institute for Romanian Culture, is something to be proud of, for the Romanians and the Serbs alike.

You have mentioned the members of your community who study in Romania or other European countries. Do these young people return to their home towns or do they decide to remain abroad?

This is the problem that the majority community faces, too. Because of the economic situation, many Romanians have gone abroad looking for a better life. I regret to say that our number has decreased due to these migrations out of the country. A few of them have eventually returned, perhaps it is 50-50 ratio; in any case, those who have returned have made a substantive contribution to the continued development of the Romanian identity and culture.

How many citizens of Serbia have declared themselves as members of the Romanian minority in the last census?

Compared to the last couple of decades, when we had over 70,000 Romanians living in Serbia, now this number is around 30,000-35,000. At the moment, there are many Romanians whose identity is just waking up. The Romanians are mainly located in Banat, with a small number living in East Serbia, as well. In the last census, we had only 2,500 Romanians registered there. I need to point out that, for the first time, we have the subject Romanian Language with the Elements of National Culture introduced in schools. This project has been implemented jointly by the Romanian National Minority Council and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, with support of certain EU institutions.

In which parts of Serbia, in addition to South Banat, do Romanians live?

The Romanians live all over Serbia, but predominantly in South Banat, as you said. They live in Belgrade, Novi Sad, etc. As I have already mentioned, the Romanians also live in East Serbia. It is believed that there are around 300,000 Romanians living in East Serbia, but, only 2,500 declared themselves as Romanians, whereas 40,000 declared themselves as Vlachs. We hope that all citizens will use minority legislation solutions and that everyone who wants to do it will be able to recognize their national identity.

How does the Romanian national minority in Serbia present themselves?

If I tell you that we have a festival that is three months older than the Gucha Festival, then we have every reason to be proud of the fact that the great Festival of the Romanian Folklore was organized for the 56th time in the Republic of Serbia. We can also be very pleased to note that over 2,000 amateurs from various regions participate in this event. Every year, the festival is organized in another town. The Managing Board of the Festival organizes a competition for future hosts of this event and the local self-governments interested in hosting it can submit their applications. In addition to this festival, the National Minority Council has identified 10 cultural events that receive financial support from the Council's budget – theatre days, a youth festival, and other gatherings of importance for our minority. We have tried to make up for the limited funds that come from different ministries with our own resources, since these events are important for our tradition. We believe that through differences we increase the value of all of us in the Republic of Serbia. We are on our way towards the European Union and sometimes people come from other

countries to teach us how we should live together. My response is always that we have lived together in this country for centuries, and we, Romanians, have never had any problems with the majority community. I am positive that it will be like this in the future, too. We strive to find the points of common interest. Such a point is forming of the Orchestra of the Romanian National Minority Council, which consists of 40 young musicians. This orchestra played with Bora Dugić at his concert at the Sava Center. Dugić was also very surprised that a minority consisting of 30,000 people can form such an outstanding quality orchestra. We are the only national minority organized in such a way in order to present a part of their cultural heritage. We also want to express our appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Serbia for including the representatives of the Romanian National Minority Council in the Commission that constructively contributed to drafting of the minority-related part of the Chapter 23 documents. We are very pleased that this Chapter has been opened, and we find it very important to improve the minority rights in our country through 11 areas defined by the Action Plan, including as many as 33 laws that need to be amended and enhanced. This is the result of a great joint effort of all stakeholders. Naturally, you can never make everyone happy, there will always be those who will complain, but, if you complete 90% of work, you have reasons to be happy. Understandably, the remaining 10% should be open for discussion, but this does not mean that the process as a whole is flawed. The Action Plan has clearly defined the timelines and responsibilities, and we find that it is of utmost importance to follow the Plan in order to speed our integration up, as well as to improve the overall position of the national minorities as soon as it is possible. We believe that the life of the national minorities who live here will be improved and made easier by legislative changes, as minority policy does not cover the preservation of the cultural heritage only. Laws that define the work of local self-government, official use of language and alphabet, and many other aspects that preserve the richness of the Republic of Serbia are as important. We need to embody these values cherished by Serbia for centuries in relevant legislative framework and provide adequate support to the national minorities, as they form the unique cultural milieu of the Republic of Serbia. To this end, Serbia can only get more respect and appreciation.

We mentioned the official use of language and alphabet. Are you satisfied

with the implementation of this law in the case of the Romanian language?

The law provides good solutions, as well, but the problem is implementation of these solutions. In our country, nine municipalities have the Romanian language in the official use. Perhaps you should ask the local mayors and institutions if the law is implemented or not. There are municipalities that are highly commendable in this regard, but, on the other hand, there are municipalities that should work more on it, e.g. on traffic signs, names of the settlements, names of the streets, etc. If a member of the Romanian national minority requests to receive certain documents in his/her mother tongue, a local self-government has the obligation to respond to this request. Does this process work perfectly in reality? No, but we have definitely created certain processes, certain possibilities and it is important to create a positive environment for their implementation, too. I hope that we are going in this direction and I can congratulate the municipalities who have done this perfectly. The Municipality of Zrenjanin is among those successful self-governments. Not only has Zrenjanin made all necessary inscriptions in the Romanian language, but they have done it in other minority languages as well. However, there are other local self-government units that still need to work on it. I do not want to sound critical, I just want to remind everyone that, regardless of insufficient funding, if a little is done every year, after couple of years the process as whole will be completed. You do not need enormous funds for this process, everything depends on the will and the knowledge of the leaderships in these local self-governments.

Are you happy with the number of members of the Romanian minority who are employed in the public administration?

We do not know what this number is. We tackled this issue in the session of the Republic Council for National Minorities, and this is also envisaged by the Action Plan. I cannot say if this number is sufficient or not, but I do not think enough attention has been given to this issue up to now. Let me give you an example. There is a municipality where, during the wedding ceremony of a Romanian couple, the text written by Duško Radović could not be read in Romanian, with an excuse that they did not have a Romanian-speaking registrar, which was not true. I hope that, in the future, these things will be organized in a much better way, as provided by the Action Plan.

Progress is Visible, but Serious Challenges Remain

On March 2, the Center for Migration Studies, with support of the Open Society Foundation, organized a round table discussion on the education in minority languages in the process of EU integrations. The participants in the round table were also briefed on the Second Report on the Implementation of the Chapter 23 Action Plan.

In her opening address, the Director of the Center, Biljana Jovic, reminded the participants about the two important events that had preceded the event: marking of the International Mother Tongue Day on February 21, and the presentation of the Second Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Chapter 23 in the last week of February.

“The general public had not been aware of any issues in regard to the education in minority languages until it was brought to the political level in the regional context of EU integrations and Serbia’s relations with its neighbors. An insufficient progress in regard to the education in the minority languages was one the main reasons that impeded the opening of the Chapter 26 last year”, Jovic said.

The public was informed that a significant progress had been made in this regard and that the education in the minority languages had been substantially improved. Snežana Vuković, from the Ministry of Education, Svetlana Zolnjanova, from the Slovak National Minority Council, Darko Sarić Lukendić, from the Croatian National Council, and Esad Džudžo, from the Bosnian National Council.

Snežana Vuković noted that the Ministry has been working on preparation of textbooks with the national minority councils for years, but that the process has not been brought to completion yet.

Speaking about the Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Execution of National Minority Rights and the activities that had been due by the of the second quarter of 2016, Vuković said that, in the case of the area of education, the statistical report clearly shows that the activities are ei-

ther about to be implemented, or are being implemented at the moment, or have been fully brought to completion. “It is clear that things are going to the right direction, since many activities have either been completed or are being implemented”, Vuković said.

While certain progress has been undoubtedly achieved, a few challenges still remain, as noted by the representatives of the national minority councils.

In her address to the attendees, Svetlana Zolnjanova expressed gratitude to

“Our national minority council believes that a possible solution for keeping the youth in our country might be in the provision of scholarships and free campus accommodation or other kind of financial support, as well as establishment of new educational profiles that our pupils are interested in. We have not forgotten students either; for many years we have provided scholarships for shortage professions. One of the affirmative measures is also an introduction of the mother tongue to preschool institutions. As we could secure support from the local self governments, the necessary funding for the process has



the organizers of the round table for providing the opportunity to the participants to look into this issue. “I believe that it is very important for us all to assess the situation from our own perspectives and identify the challenges and all obstacles, in order to improve the classes in our languages. I would also like to focus more on the issue of implementation of the Chapter 23, as, up to now, the national minority councils have not participated in any activities in regard to the Chapter 26”, Zolnjanova said.

She noted that one of the big challenges for the Slovak minority is decreased number of pupils. As she said, in 2008, over 3,200 pupils had attended classes in the Slovak language on the elementary school level, whereas, presently, this number has decreased to around 2,600. This decrease has been caused by migrations of Slovaks to the moth-erland.

been secured by our national minority council”.

The participants particularly noted the problems in organization of the Mother Tongue with the Elements of the National Culture classes. The mandatory model they must follow, i.e. having a group of at least 15 pupils, combination of grades, or, even, combination of schools, is not adequate for all minorities. Darko Sarić Lukendić noted this problem and emphasized that, in the territory of the Subotica Municipality, this problem had been resolved with good cooperation with the local self government, which covered the cost of transportation of the pupils who attend the Mother Tongue with the Elements of the National Culture class. However, he added, the problems of covering the transportation costs have not been resolved on the level of all local self governments.

Lukendić reminded the participants that the Croatian National Council, with support of the Open Society Foundation, had prepared the Strategy of Education in the Croatian Language in the Republic of Serbia in 2016. However, as he noted, a major problem is lack of textbooks, as the elementary school textbooks are still being prepared, whereas the issue of the high school textbooks has not been addressed yet. "The textbooks that are being used at the moment are imported from Croatia", Sarić Lukendić said.

"What we aim for is creation of a Croatian School Center for Education in the Croatian Language in Subotica. The idea is not to have it as a school center for Croats only, but to have the center where the classes will be organized in the Croatian language", Sarić Lukendić concluded.

Džudžo: Process of Denying and Delaying Acquired Rights

Speaking about the Bosniak community, Esad Džudžo, on behalf of the Bosniak National Council, pointed out that the Bosniak community faces two challenges in regard to the right to education: the one is denial of its minority identity, and the other one is delay in the legal procedures in regard to the execution of their rights.

"We must not forget a few things. Last year, we received, for the first time, complete plans for textbooks for elementary and high schools in the minority languages. It is also important to note the signing the Textbook Memorandum. In the case of the Bosniak national minority, in addition to 229 textbooks that are presently used in elementary and high schools, we lack 52 textbooks envisaged by the Memorandum, and not a single textbook from this group has been finished yet. The Memorandum prescribed that all of them should have been finished and distributed to the pupils at the beginning of the school year 2016/2017", Džudžo said.



The key note speakers, who addressed the participants on behalf of their national minority councils, noted that not only do the national minority councils need to be included in the legislation changes, but they also must be actively engaged in the working group that is creating the best models for the education in the minority languages.

Kostić: Of 21 National Minority Councils, 14 Have Replied in Time

Igor Kostić, on behalf of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, provided

expert presentation of the Second Report. He noted that 70 stakeholders had activities included in the reporting plan. The deadline for submission of reports was from November 14, 2016 through January 30, 2017.

"During this period, we organized initial training sessions with all 70 institutions. Difference in comparison with the previous report is that this one includes generic bearers of activities, i.e.

the bearers are local self government units, national minority councils, civil society organizations, media, elementary and high schools, etc. This report more precisely points to the exact level of contribution of individual institutions to the implementation of every activity. Of 70 bearers of activities, 57 have submitted reports. A number of local self government units, local councils for interethnic relations, and media outlets, the National Library of Serbia, seven national minority councils, and the Press Council have not submitted reports. Of

21 national minority councils, 14 replied in due time. Reports have not been received from the Albanian, Ashkali, Bosniak, Roma, Greek, Montenegrin, and Ukrainian national minority councils", Kostić reported.

Kostić particularly noted that the Office for Human and Minority Rights will not send the reporting forms in the next reporting cycle, as it is assumed that the bearers already have the forms that they will use for all subsequent reports. Furthermore, he added that, as of this year, the reporting will be done quarterly and not twice a year as it had initially been envisaged, and that it is necessary to submit all reports by the set deadline. "In cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, we have identified the local self-government units that are considered to multiethnic, as provided by the Law on Local Self-Government, we contacted them and we expect to receive their reports in this cycle that will give us a clearer picture on how this plan is being implemented locally", Kostić concluded.



Contracts Signed with Representatives of the National Minority Councils Registered in the AP Vojvodina

Source: Provincial Government

On March 23, Mihalj Njilaš, the Deputy Prime Minister in the Provincial Government and the Provincial Secretary for Education, Legislation, Public Administration and National Minorities, signed contracts on allocation of funds for financing the work and development activities in 2017 with representatives of fourteen national minority councils.

As the Provincial Deputy Prime Minister noted during the signing ceremony with the representatives of the national councils, the contracts on financial support are made with the national councils registered in the territory of the AP Vojvodina. "As it has been the case thus far, the funds for the support to the regular work and program activities have been allocated in the budget. These

funds, along with the funds from the Republic budget and local self-governments budgets, secure the existence, work and strengthening of cultural autonomy of the national minorities in Vojvodina", Deputy PM Njilas said.

Mihal Njilas noted as particularly important the fact that, in March last year, the Government of the Republic of Serbia endorsed the Action Plan for Implementation of National Minority Rights. To this end, he emphasized that it is of special importance that the Plan envisages that the role of the national minority councils shall be strengthened further and their authorities more clearly defined. Njilas added that the process of amending the Law on National Minority Councils is under way and that a special Working

Group is working intensively on the new Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on the National Minority councils. Representatives of the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Legislation, Public Administration and National Minorities – National Communities participate in the work and activities of this Working Group.

For the year 2017, a total amount of 60,100,000.00 dinars has been provided for co-financing of activities of the national minority councils. While the amount is only slightly higher compared to the last two years, but it shows a clear tendency, and, most importantly, commitment of the Provincial Government to support the work and development of the national minority councils by increased funding, as well.

Allocated Funds for Official Use of National Minorities' Language and Alphabet

In the 2017 AP Vojvodina Budget, 9.5 million dinars has been allocated to projects dealing with the official use of language and alphabet, for national minorities' language training of public administration staff, for development of e-management in multi-lingual environment, for preparation and mounting of multilingual signs with names of towns and villages, streets, squares, institutions, organizations, public notices, and for printing of multilingual forms and public notifications.

In his address, Secretary Njilas said: "It is not possible to speak about preserving uniqueness of a national

community – regardless of whether it is a minority or majority community – if this community cannot use its language and alphabet. As multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity, and element of which is multilingualism, as well, are among greatest riches of our Vojvodina, a quality that we are recognized for as a region in Europe and in the world, it is important to preserve this wealth, to nourish it and to enhance it, and we can do this only if we are united in achieving this goal.

"In order to reach the strategic objective envisaged by the Action Plan, it is necessary to carry out a number of activities that include those im-

plemented by the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Legislation, Public Administration, and National Minorities – National Communities. One of these activities brought us together today – to secure and disburse funds to the institutions and organizations in the territories of the local self governments where at least one national minority language is in use. Thus, by direct disbursement of the budgetary funds and by issuing and implementing calls for proposals, we hope to promote execution of the right to official use and language and alphabet. The Action Plan envisages numerous activities that are to be implemented by the local self governments, too."

There Are Results, But There Are Problems, Too

Source: Hrvatska riječ

Photo: Center for Development of Civil Society

The debate on the research “Information in the National Minority Languages – Ten Years After”, which was organized on March 28, was presented as a contribution to preparation of the new Media Strategy. To this end, representatives of the national minority councils and the national minority media were invited to participate in the debate.

The focus of the debate was the analysis of the development of the media in the languages of the national minority communities in the last ten years. After the media of 16 national minority communities had been analyzed, it was concluded that a certain progress had been made in the last ten years. However, faced with the consequences of the privatization of local media and reduction of financial resources, the media representatives noted that they did not have adequate conditions for a quality operations and that some of them are struggling to survive and maintain the continuity of their work.

During the debate, the authors of the analysis pointed out that the engagement of the non-governmental and other organizations is most desirable at the moment and that the stakeholders should opt for creation of “cheaper” media, such as radio and internet portals, which will be able to provide information to the members of the national minority communities in their languages.

“For couple of hundreds of Euros it is possible to register such a media, particularly if it is an online media. Associations of citizens have already used this opportunity and such media outlets have been created in a few local self-government units. Their quality is still questionable, as it is yet unknown what their personnel structure looks like. But it is important that some activities have started in this

regard”, Miroslav Keveždi, one of the researchers, said.

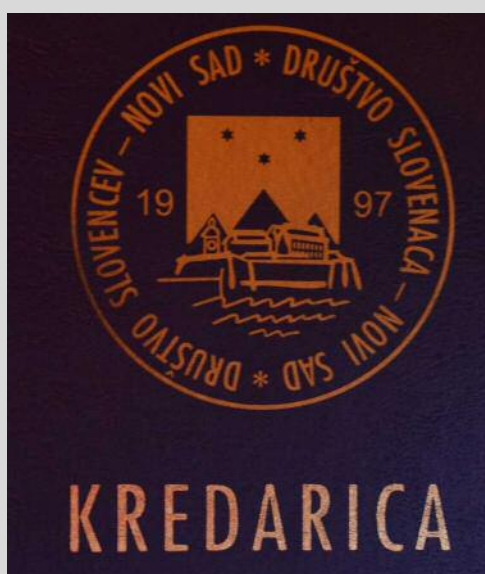
As it has been the case in many similar debates thus far, the participants in this debate noted that the minority media do not trust fully the project financing, which has been suggested as the state as one of the solutions for the production of media contents. Some of the reasons are the fact that the open calls for proposals, which are issued by the state institutions on Republic, Provincial, and local level, are not adequately defined in regard to the category of the media that base their work on special financial plans, and the amounts received are disproportionately distributed and insufficient for serious work. Another problem is that it is impossible to secure sustainability, i.e. continued funding. Media are nowadays forced to look for various sources of funding and are never sure whether the new issue or the program will be produced in time, as it was the case in the past.

However, project financing enables the participants in the open calls the increased pluralism of the media and forces them to learn new skills, such as project preparation skills.

This research consists of three parts: analysis of traditional (printed and electronic) media, analysis of online media, and field research of creators and recipients of minority and multi-lingual media in the Serbian media space.

The authors of the analysis prepared a list of recommendations for further functioning of these media outlets. It was noted that the state must come up with mechanisms that would ensure collection of the public media service fee after it has been re-introduced. It is also necessary to establish an optimal amount required for secure and independent work of the public media services.

The debate was organized by the Center for Development of Civil Society and the Open Society Foundation.



Correction

In the Minority News Issue 33, on page 10, in the text “Two Decades of the Association of Slovenians “Kredarica””, we included the news of the Radio Television of Vojvodina, which was not fully accurate. Instead of Saša Verbič, the president of the National Council of the Slovenian National Minority, as the text read, the attendees were greeted by Dragomir Zupanc, the chairman of the Council’s Board for Culture.

We herewith express our gratitude to the chairman of the Slovenian Minority Council’s Information Board for drawing our attention to this inaccuracy.

National Minority Councils for Amendments to the Law on Information

Source: Tanjug

Representatives of the national minority councils have supported the initiative of the Ministry of Culture and Information to amend the Law on Public Information and Media in order to prescribe the minimum amount of funds that local self-governments need to allocate from their budget for project co-financing of the media, which should not be less than 1% of their total budget.

In the meeting organized at the Ministry of Culture and Information, the participants agreed that the amendments should also prescribe the deadlines for the local self-governments to issue public calls for proposals for project co-financing of the media, so that all media outlets, including those in the national minority languages, can have funds at their disposal for implementation of projects of public importance.



The representatives of the national minority councils suggested that a special desk for minority languages be formed in the Radio Television of Serbia and requested support from the Ministry of Culture and Information in monitoring the implementation of the legal obligation of the privatized media to observe the program scheme.

As the State Secretary for Information

and Media, Nino Brajović, noted, in 2016, more funds were allocated from the Republic budget and the budget of the AP Vojvodina for the media in national minority languages than for all other media, with the exception of the payments to the media public services.

"The minority media received around rsd 305,000,000, and all other media got rsd 215,000,000, which means that 33% more was allocated for the project co-financing of the information in the minority languages than for other media outlets. This trend will be continued in 2017, as well, and we will try to increase the allocations in line with the overall increase of the Ministry's budget. Thus we will continue to observe high standards in the information and the overall position of the national minorities", Brajović said.

Slovenian Community

Learning about the Language, Tradition and Cultural Heritage of Slovenia

Source: Slovenian National Minority Council

The youngest members of the Association of Slovenians "Logar Valley" from Pančevo, together with the children from the Association of Slovenians "Kredarica" from Zrenjanin, went to excursion to Postojna in Slovenia on March 25-29.

As prof.dr. Milena Spremo, who is in charge of the Slovenian Language Course for the members of the Pančevo and Zrenjanin Associations of Slovenians, said, this excursion showed the children the beauties of Slovenia – its natural beauties, monuments, culture, and tradition - in a very good way. At the same time, this was also an opportunity for all participants to learn more about the education system in Slovenia and exchange experiences. The children were accommodated at the "Proteus" Youth Home in Postojna during their stay. The

hosts also organized a visit to the elementary school, where the children attended the regular classes with their peers.

In line with the envisage program of the excursion, they also visited a number of well known tourist attractions, such as



the Postojna Cave, Predjam City, Škocjanska Caves, Lipica Stables, and the towns of Ajdovščina and Štanjel. On the last day, they visited Ljubljana, where the children who attend the Slovenian language course, together with their peers from Slovenia, took part in the Children Theatre Festival.

The chief organizer of the excursion, prof. Vera Popović of the Zrenjanin Association of Slovenians "Kredarica", prepared, for this occasion, a play that received a big round of applause and ovations.

This excursion is only a part of the program planned for this year. The youngest and the most successful members of the Associations of Slovenians in Pančevo and Zrenjanin will take part in the "Welcome Home" festival this summer, and the summer schools that will be organized all over Slovenia.

The organization of the excursion was financially supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Slovenia, the Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, the Office for Slovenian Diaspora, and the National Minority Council of the Slovenian Minority.

Roma Inclusion Support Project Brought to Completion

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights

Uthree-and-a-half-year long project that has been supported by the European Union and implemented by the OSCE Mission to Serbia in cooperation with the Office for Human and Minority Rights, was completed on March 31, with several thousand Roma from over 20 cities and municipalities having been direct beneficiaries of the project.

Project “We Are Here Together – European Support for Roma Inclusion” is one of the most successful and effective projects in regard to the Roma integration implemented in our country for last ten years, Suzana Paunović said at the closing conference organized at the Deputies Club.

As Paunović said, information on the status of meeting the objectives of the projects, on all accomplishments, as well as on problems and challenges, was constantly available. The problems were jointly resolved, and such an approach might have been the “secret of success” of this initiative, and the aforementioned model of cooperation should be kept in the future, as well, Paunović concluded.

The project directly supported the implementation of both the previous and the new Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in key areas, such as education, employment, housing, provision of services on a local level, Paunović said and added that a few of the achieved results have undoubtedly contributed to meeting the commitments made by the Action Plan for the Chapter 23 in the process of Serbia’s EU integrations.

The project team supported local self-governments in creating 20 mobile teams, and the first 20 local self-government units formally signed the Declaration on the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women, which should give a new energy and dedication to the local self-governments in regard to the inclusion of the Roma community, the director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights said.

Talking about best practices in employment of the Roma, Paunović reminded that last pieces of the equipment had been distributed to 17 companies employing 60 Roma men and women, and the total value of the donated equipment amounts to Euro 375,000.

In the area of education, the project reached the envisaged goal of 1,000 scholarships granted over two school years. The important educational pedagogic assis-



tant certification process has been brought to completion, and 191 of them have received diplomas in a ceremony organized at the Kragujevac University, which wrapped up a several years long process, making these assistants an integral part of the educational process, Paunović noted.

In the area of housing, 13 urban plans for substandard settlements in 11 municipalities have been made, whereas the technical documentation for 20 infrastructure projects in 14 municipalities has been prepared. With support provided by the Ministry of Construction, Traffic and Infrastructure, 583 substandard Roma settlements have been mapped in Serbia, and the Geographic Information System (GIS) has been established to enable monitoring and enhancement of housing conditions.

Oscar Benedict, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the EU Delegation to Serbia, noted that his first mission upon arrival in Serbia was to give children scholarships within this project. The children were full with enthusiasm and we are happy to have been able to support them. He pointed

out that the EU support to the Roma inclusion up to now amounts Euro 11.5 million and that it is planned to allocate additional 20 million for this purpose. Benedict announced that this year’s Seminar on Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women will be organized in July.

Vitomir Mihajlović, the president of the Roma National Minority Council thanked the Government of the Republic of Serbia for its commitment to the resolution of

the issue of the Roma inclusion, pointing out that such results can be achieved only by joint engagement. Mihajlovic also thanked the members of the Roma national minority for participating in the implementation of the project, as well as to other partners and local self-government units. He noted that tens of thousands Roma felt the benefits of the Project. By forming mobile teams in 20 local self-government units, a better inter-sector cooperation and distribution of

competencies and responsibilities between the local stakeholders engaged in the Roma inclusion have been achieved, Mihajlović concluded.

“EU Support to the Roma Inclusion” Project is worth Euro 4.8 million. It is funded by the EU and implemented by the OSCE Mission to Serbia. It provides support to the institutions of the Republic of Serbia in regard to the enhancement of the position of the Roma in the following areas: access to fundamental rights, civic participation, labor market, health care, social care, adequate housing, and job creation. The principal partners in the project are the Office for Human and Minority Rights, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development, the Ministry of Construction, Traffic and Infrastructure, the Roma National Minority Council, the Permanent Conference of Towns and Municipalities, NGO Praxis, the Roma Education Fund, the Office for EU Integrations of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and the Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction.

Emphasis on the Problems of the Community

Photo: Hlas Ljudu

From March 27 - 29, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovakia, Lukas Parizek, with his delegation, held a number of meetings with colleagues from the Foreign Ministry of our country, the officials of the AP Vojvodina, and representatives of the Slovak community in Serbia.

A meeting was held with the deputy Prime Minister of the Provincial Government and the Provincial Secretary for Education, Legislation, Public Administration, and National Minorities – National Communities, Mihalj Njilaš (Mihály Nyilas), who pointed out that the Provincial Government gives special attention to preservation of national identity of all national communities in Vojvodina, including the Slovak community, which is the second largest community in the Province. “We respect the legislative framework in the area of education, culture, and information in the languages of the national minorities, as it is precisely envisaged in the Chapter 23, one of the key documents in the process of the accession of the Republic of Serbia to the EU”, Nyilas said, and added that “in this regard, the drafting of the new Laws on the national minorities and the national minority councils is underway”.

The focus of the delegation’s conversation with the Speaker of the Assembly of the AP Vojvodina, Istvan Pasztor, was on the position and execution of rights of the Slovak national minority

the country. As the representatives of the Office for Slovak Diaspora said, in 2012, 600 certificates of origin were issued, whereas, last year, this number increased to 2,200. The State Secretary



in our country, particularly in the area of education, information, culture, and preservation of the language and the alphabet.

In the meeting with the community’s representatives, State Secretary Parizek expressed concern over the fact that, every year, a high number of Slovaks from Serbia file applications for confirmation of Slovak origin and leaves

expressed interest in the status of the organization of classes in the Slovak language, i.e. in the problems that have arisen in a few schools where the law does not allow that groups smaller than 15 pupils be formed. The representatives of the Slovak National Minority Council’s Board for Education informed the State Secretary how the community has tried to solve this problem.

Romanian Community

Cooperation between the Romanian National Minority Council and the RTV

Source: RTV

A delegation of the Romanian National Minority Council, consisting of the president, Daniel Petrović, and Niku Čobanu, paid a visit to the Radio Television of Vojvodina.

Dr. Miodrag Koprivica, the general manager of the RTV, briefed the guests on the situation and the activities of the RTV.

Both parties expressed satisfaction over the beginning of construction of the new RTV building.

During the meeting, the interlocutors agreed that it is necessary to strengthen further the network of correspondents and to improve the status of the employees when the legislative and financial situation makes it possible.

The Romanian National Minority Council noted that, given the multilingual structure of the RTV program, it would be logical to include representatives of the Romanian minority in the RTV Program Board.

The RTV management and the Romanian National Minority Council agreed to continue and enhance the cooperation in line with the law and mutual needs.

On the Chapter 23 and the Political Situation

Source: Hrvatska Rijec



On March 10, 2017, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, Davor Ivo Štir, met with the representatives of the Croats in Serbia – the president of the Democratic Union of Croats in Vojvodina and the deputy in the Serbian Parliament, Tomislav Žigmanov, and the president of the Croatian National Council, Slaven Bačić.



The meeting was held as a part of the regular cooperation and consultations on the rights and the position of the Croatian national minority in Serbia, and on the support the Republic of Croatia provides to the Croats who live outside the country.

“This is a continuation of regular communication of the highest representatives of the Croatian community in Serbia

with the Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. Namely, this meeting is a result of the agreement made in the earlier meeting my colleague Bačić and I had with the Croatian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Davor Ivo Štir, in Zagreb on December 12 last year. We noted in the Zagreb meeting with Minister Štir that there was a need for a direct and frequent communication, and this subsequent meeting is a direct result of the agreement made”, Žigmanov said.

During the meeting with Minister Štir and his associates, Slaven Bačić briefed the attendees on the status of the EU integrations of Serbia and the position of the HNC in this regard. President Bačić noted a number of challenges and problems in the activities of the state bodies in regard to human and minority rights, i.e. Negotiating Chapter 23, and also pointed to the HNC activities in this regard, particularly in regard to the monitoring of the process.

The President of SCHV informed the interlocutors on the political situation and the position of Croats in Serbia, noting particularly the position of this party in regard to the coming elections for the president of Serbia and the challenges in this process.” I informed Minister Štir on the most recent cases of violation of human rights of the members of the Croatian community and politically motivated dismissals and terminations of employment of the public servants because of their ethnicity”, Žigmanov said.

Bosniak Community

Fulfillment of a Centennial Dream

Source: BNV



On March 29, a press conference was organized at the Bosniak National Council on the enrollment of the first generation of pupils who will attend the classes in the Bosnian language in the school year 2017/2018. In his address to the journalists, the deputy president of the BNC, Esad Džudžo, noted that all systemic and legal conditions have been met for full implementation of classes in Bosnian.

Currently, 239 textbooks are used in the classes in the Bosnian language. These textbooks are either especially created or translated, and a new plan for the textbooks in Bosnian has recently been approved. Educational standards for elementary school have been endorsed, and the eight-graders will, for the first time,

take the final exam in their mother tongue, the Bosnian language. Deputy President Džudžo particularly emphasized that the process of introducing the classes in the Bosnian language should be awarded a gold medal, but, this medal, too, would have two sides. The one side of the medal is fulfillment of a centennial dream for the Bosniaks, the other one is battle to overcome numerous obstacles.

Deputy President Džudžo announced that commissions will be formed to monitor the implementation of classes in the Bosnian language. In the coming period, these commissions will monitor all enrollment procedures. Parents of the children who will enroll in the fifth grade will not have to declare their preference of the language of the classes, if their children have attended Bosnian classes in the

first four grades. Likewise, the pupils, who have finished elementary school and taken the final exam in the Bosnian language, will not have to declare the language preference for the high school classes, and they will automatically, as provided by the Law, enroll in the high school in the Bosnian language.

Deputy President dr. Redžep Škrijelj once again invited parents of the children who will enroll in the first grade during school year 2017/2018 to choose the classes in the Bosnian language and confidently resist any pressures they may experience in this regard. At the moment, 14,545 children are attending pre-school classes, elementary school classes, and high school classes in the Bosnian language. This represents 86% of all Bosniak nationality children of school age in Sanjak.



Centar za istraživanja migracija
Center for Migration Studies

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