

**Municipalities and Towns
Report on the Implementation
of the Minority Action Plan**

**Action Plan for Social
Inclusion of Roma Men
and Women Adopted**

37 Minority News

June 2017



ANA HRČAN LESKOVAC: Preservation and Development of Culture Are Our Priority

**Round Table “Information
in the Bulgarian Language”
held in Dimitrovgrad**

**Young Actors from
Ruski Krstur on a Tour
in Slovakia**

HIGHLIGHT



Municipalities and Towns File Reports on Implementation of the Minority Action Plan

For the first time, local self-government units and local councils on inter-ethnic relations have been included in the reporting process. Questionnaires have been sent to 76 local self-governments and 53 councils on inter-ethnic relations. As Suzana Paunović noted in the meeting presenting the Third Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Execution of the National Minority Rights for the first trimester of 2017 16 local self-governments and 6 councils for inter-ethnic relations submitted information on their activities.



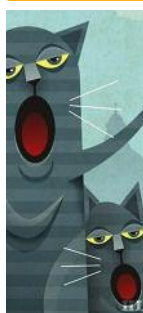
EU Accession and Enhancement of the Minority Policy and Inter-ethnic Relations

On June 1, Forum on Ethnic Relations organized a round table discussion "EU Accession and Enhancement of the Minority Policy and Inter-ethnic Relations in Serbia" at the Niš Media Centre, with support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.



Action Plan for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women Adopted

In its session on June 7, 2017, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia. The Action Plan covers the period from 2017 through 2018. This document envisages implementation of measures defined by the Strategy, which shall create conditions for access to full execution of human rights to the ethnic Roma citizens.



Encounters under the Linden Trees

On Saturday, June 17, at the Slovak Cultural Centre "Pavel Jozef Šafarik" in Novom Sad, the 46th "Encounters under the Linden Tree", a traditional gathering of young writers and painters, who publish their works in the Youth Magazine "Vzlet", was organized.

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Minority Information as an Irrelevant Issue?

Being able to get the information in one's mother tongue is one of the fundamental human rights, and, as such, it is frequently referred to by the members of the national minorities and the state officials alike.

This right does not necessarily include the existence of a minority media. Minorities can receive information through a national public service broadcaster, as well. These possibilities exist with both of our public broadcasters, RTS and RTV, but they do not exist for all minorities. Whereas the Radio Television of Vojvodina, in its second program, broadcasts contents in 13 languages, the situation is quite different with the Radio Television of Serbia.

After almost a full year since the opening of the Chapter 23, and more than a year since the Action Plan for Execution of the Rights of National Minorities was adopted, we can clearly see what has been achieved in regard to the information and media in the minority languages.

One of the envisaged activities is the increase of contents in the national minority languages in the program of the national public service broadcaster RTS (both radio and TV). This activity should be implemented by creating a special desk for program in the national minority languages. At this moment, such a desk has not been created yet. Neither is there a slightest indication that it will be created in a foreseeable future. And let us recall that the re-introduction of the program in minority languages is also envisaged by the Law on the Public Media Service Providers.

As we noted earlier, some minorities have media or programs in their languages, whereas the others do not have a single minute or a page of information in their mother tongue. Vlach community is in such a position, not having a single media outlet in the Vlach language. Other media outlets do provide information on the Vlach community, but there are no media contents in the Vlach language. The Albanian community is in a slightly better position, as they do have on-line media, which receive no support whatsoever from the state. Permanent funding is not provided to the media in the Bosniak language either. The information in the Bulgarian language is problematic, as well...

The list of problems does not end here, and we do not have to carry out an in-depth analysis to conclude that the state does not treat all minorities in the same way. It is yet to be seen what kind of impact this will have on our accession to the European Union.

30 different national minorities live in Serbia



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Preservation and promotion of culture is our priority



The Cultural Institute of Vojvodina Slovaks was founded in 2008 by the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the Slovak National Minority Council. At the very beginning, the Cultural Institute of Vojvodina Slovaks set the priority objective of its work – to make the traditional and contemporary culture of Slovaks recognizable. Ana Hrcan Leskovic, the present Director of the Institute, has been working on achieving this goal since 2015. As she explained, the Institute deals with the promotion, stimulation, preservation, development and organization of the culture, science, and language of the Slovak national community in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, with the extraordinary works of the Slovak national community, multicultural and intercultural activities in Vojvodina, cooperation with the institutions and organization in the areas of culture, science, and art in the Republic of Serbia, amateurism in the Slovak national community in Vojvidan, as well as with the education, specialization, organization of seminars, workshops and camps, development of tourism in culture, information-documentary activities in culture and art, etc.

Although we are already in the middle of 2017, can we briefly look back to the last year that you spent in the position of the Institute's Director? How would you describe the work of the Institute in the previous year?

- I can say that the previous year was fairly successful. This does not mean that I am not satisfied, but, perhaps, we could have

The Institute's vision is to make the traditional and contemporary art and culture of Vojvodina Slovaks recognizable to the broadest audiences possible.

done more and we could have done it better. We have largely completed the wide spectrum of activities envisaged by the annual plan and program. The Institute's work was also affected by the 2015 personnel changes, namely by the change of the director, so we tried to bring the projects launched by the previous director to completion, as well.

Most certainly, you did not give up on the traditional projects....

Yes, we organized the traditional activities, such as the Musicological Conference, Photo Competition, etc., we issued the annual publication Maják (the Lighthouse), etc. I would like to note that last year we had the highest number of participants in the photo competition. We had 20 competitors from 20 towns, who sent more than 200 photographs. We also enlarged

too, by supporting the publishing of the book "150 Years of the Theatre in Petrovac", by Dušan Bajin and Vladimir Valenčík.

We can say that you have been very active. Can you single out one activity as the most important one?

I would not dare to do it, since I am very proud of everything we have done, given the decreased funding we received from the Vojvodina Budget.



our library, which now has over 3,000 books. There are numerous courses and lectures organized at the Institute for several years. Since last year, our focus in this regard has been protocol education. We had a lecturer from the Slovak Republic, and I am pleased to note that these courses had high number of attendants. We are thinking about publishing a small book on this issue.

Last year, the Slovak minority celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Slovak theatre in this part of Europe. The Institute took an active part in the celebration of this jubilee?

Yes, we contributed by organizing a documentary exhibition, "150 Years of Theatre in Petrovac", by Vladimir Valenčík as the author, and, in cooperation with the Theatre Institute from Bratislava, we organized the exhibition "The World of Marija Havran's Costumes". Let me explain to your readers, Marija Havran studied at the Academy of Art and Applied Art in Belgrade, as well as at the Academy of Art in Bratislava, she was the scenery and costume design major. In 2002, she got PhD, and nowadays she cooperates with many renowned theatre directors in Slovakia and abroad. I would also like to note that we have contributed to the celebration of the anniversary financially,

All communities struggle with same problems in regard to securing funding for their basic operations. However, the Institute cannot help in this regard. It is the local self government who should deal with these problems.

We mentioned the traditional activities. Are you working on any new contents?

- I believe that the Institution has not provided enough space to the youngest members of our minority community. We have had no activities for them other than the annual gathering before Christmas. I have been thinking about organizing theatrical courses for them, which may inspire them to become more seriously engaged in the theatrical work at a later stage. We will also focus on slightly older audiences- elementary and high school pupils – predominantly in promoting our

festivals. We have agreed with Martinkova Benkova, a Slovene who was the coordinator of our popular music festival "Golden Key", that we will visit schools in search for potential participants in this festival. Why have we decided to take this step? The main reason that the same group of singers participates in all our music festivals, regardless of whether it is a folk music or pop music festival. They are talented singers, but we would like to broaden the choice – both in the folk music and in the pop music arena.

Thus you can most certainly contribute to the development of festivals, but how can you contribute to the development of culture in general in small communities?

After our visits to smaller communities, we always have the same impression: all communities struggle with same issues, predominantly with how to secure funds for basic functioning, how to pay for heating bills, electricity bills, etc. However, the Institute cannot provide any help in this regard. Local self-governments should be addressed instead. We can provide them with expert support, e.g. in regard to organization of different events, exhibitions, training courses for choreographers, etc., but we cannot give them financial support.

We slowly come to the fact that, in many local communities, citizens' associations have lately started assuming the role of key actors in regard to organization of cultural activities. What do you think about this trend?

- I believe that it can mean two things only – that local self governments are not interested in cultural activities – which is a negative aspect of this trend. The other thing, a positive thing, is that there are young people in these communities with highly developed awareness of importance of these activities, who have decided to assume this role to bridge the existing gap. I believe that it is very difficult for them to secure funding and implement planned activities, when they have to wait for results of public competitions for financial support, and, later on to dispose with the granted funds, that are, in most cases, much lower than expected. But, once again, we are fortunate that there are individuals who will not allow that members of small communities or villages be deprived of cultural events. And local self governments should think twice about their (lack of) actions.

Municipalities and Towns File Reports on Implementation of the Minority Ac-

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights

In her opening remarks in the meeting presenting the Third Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Execution of the National Minority Rights for the first trimester of 2017, organized on June 8, the director of the Government Office for Human and Minority Rights,

reporting system will continue to be improved by additional training provided to the state administration and the local self-governments in Serbia.

Speaking about the previous reporting cycle, Paunović noted that the First and the Second Reports on the Implementation of the Minority Ac-

Rights, Meho Omerović, noted that no candidate country in the EU accession process had a special Minority Action Plan, and that Serbia also has the Action Plan for Roma men and women. This shows the willingness of the Government and the society to keep working on further promotion of the position of minorities in Serbia.



Suzana Paunović, noted that the Office for Human and Minority Rights of the Government of the Republic of Serbia has continued to enhance the reporting system on the implementation of the Minority Action Plan.

For the first time, local self-government units and local councils on inter-ethnic relations have been included in the reporting process. Questionnaires were sent to 76 local self-governments and 53 councils on inter-ethnic relations. In response, 16 local self-governments and 6 councils for inter-ethnic relations submitted information on their activities, Paunović concluded.

As she said, 65% of the activities due in this reporting period have been either completed or are implemented successfully, which gives a clear overview on the efficiency of the activities of each individual stakeholder and their overall contribution in the implementation process.

As Paunović said, the monitoring and

tion Plan were discussed in the session of the Government's Council for National Minorities.

The Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Human and Minority

Ivana Antić, Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government assessed that it is very important that the dialogue of the state with the national minority councils, international and civil society organizations, and independent bodies has been improved in the process of the accession to the EU. The information has been identified and adopted as the priority area of financing for this year, in the amount of RSD 1.8 million, Antić said.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the state agencies and institutions, members of the Parliament, as well as the representatives of the independent bodies, international organizations, civil society, national minority councils, and the media.



Action Plan for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women Ratified

Source: Roma National Minority Council

In its session on June 7, 2017, the Government of the Republic of Serbia ratified the Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia. The Action Plan covers the period from 2016 to 2018.

This document implements the measures envisaged by the Strategy and creates conditions for full access to the exercise of human rights to the Roma individuals. The Action Plan defines five priority areas: education, housing, employment,

lic of Serbia, by adopting the Action Plan, showed commitment and care for the promotion of the position of Roma Men and Women in our country. As he noted, the Action Plan will intensify the work of the institutions on the national and local level to stamp out the discrimination against this national minority, so that they are more actively included in the Serbian society.

The President of the Roma National Minority Council, prof Vitomir Mihajlović, said that certain results had been made in the previous period in regard to the permanent im-

cedures Code have enabled additional birth entries for individuals who have not been registered in the Birth Registry and defined procedures in this regard. However, the main obstacles to the social-economic integration of Roma men and women have not been removed and a full normative foundation for implementation of the long term measures for reduction of poverty and achievement of fundamental equality of the citizens of Roma nationality has not been put in place. Therefore, a new Strategy had to be made, and the Action Plan, as its accompanying document.



health care, and social protection. The Action Plan is funded from the Budget of the Republic of Serbia, donations, and funds provided under the framework of the Chapter 23 Action Plan.

State Secretary in the Ministry for Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and the chairman of the Council for Promotion of Position of Roma and the implementation of the Decade of the Roma Inclusion, dr Nenad Ivanišević, said that the Government of the Repub-

provement of the position of the Roma men and women. The percentage of Roma children in the elementary schools has been increased, the affirmative measures have been introduced in the enrolment process or Roma students in high schools and universities, the access to execution of certain rights has been improved by introduction of Roma men and women in the implementation of public policies (pedagogic assistants, health mediators, coordinators for Roma issues), the changes of the Civil Pro-

"I am very pleased with the fact that the implementation of the Strategy is gaining momentum and that funds for all measures envisaged by the Strategy are being provided through the newly ratified 2017-2018 Action Plan. Joint action of the state and local institutions, the Roma National Minority Council, CSOs, and international organizations, with the Coordination Body's monitoring of the implementation of the activities, will most certainly yield fruit", Mihajlović concluded.

Conditions for Stable Functioning of Information in the National Minority Languages Secured

Source: Provincial Secretariat for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities

On June 12, the Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Information, and Relations with Religious Communities, prof. Miroslav Štatkić, and his associates, met with the Deputy Chief of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, Michael Uyehara, to discuss the information in the national minority languages in the territory of Vojvodina.

During the talks, Štatkić noted, among other things, that the support to the information of the members of the national minorities, as an important segment of preservation of their cultural and national identity, one of the key objectives of the Secretariat and the Provincial Government as a whole.

“The evidence in this regard is the fact that, in this year, we have earmarked 82.5% of the total funds allocated for the support to the media in the Province for the information in the minority languages. However, information is not the only segment in which we support the preservation of identity of the national minorities, the multi-national and the multi-confession characteristics of Vojvodina. We provide similar support in other areas under the jurisdiction of our Secretariat”, Štatkić added.



The support to the information in the national minority languages has, as the Assistant Secretary for Public Information, Media, and Analytics, Đorđe Vukmirović, been carried out in three segments – direct subsidies to 21 minority magazines issued by 9 publishers, project co-financing of private media, i.e. media founded by non-governmental organizations and citizens’ associations, through open calls for proposals, and, finally, through minority languages program broadcasted by the JMU Radio-television Vojvodina.

“Thus, the “Magyar Szo”, “Hlas ljudu”, “Libartatea”, “Hrvatska riječ” and other magazines in the minority lan-

guages shall be supported this year with RSD 264,805,000.00. On the other hand, for the support to the private media, or the media founded by the NGOs and the citizens’ associations, we have earmarked RSD 6,200,000.00, i.e. two-and-a-half times more than last year. Finally, in the draft of the rebalance of the Provincial Budget that will be presented to the MPs in the Vojvodina Assembly, we have earmarked an additional RSD 3,000,000.00 for these purposes, Vukmirović said.

Speaking about the JMU RTV, he reminded that it annually broadcasts 6,600 hours of television program in the nine minority languages, which is, averagely, more than 18 hours a day, and that the 24-hour radio program with contents in 12 minority languages, is broadcast on the second and the third channel of the Radio Novi Sad.

Expressing appreciation for the warm welcome and detailed briefing, Michael Uyehara said that the OSCE followed the media privatization process with special attention, particularly in the case of the media providing information in the national minority languages. He noted that this segment of the public information has obviously been carefully taken care of in Vojvodina.



Preparations for the First European Conference on Minority Media in Progress

Source: Heror Media Pont

In a press conference organized in Edjeseg on June 21, Dalibor Rožić, member of the City Council for Culture, Djordje Vukmirović, Assistant Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Information, and Relations with Religious Communities, Nataša Heror, director of the “Heror Media Pont” Agency, and Rozalija Ekres, director of the “Magyar Szo” company informed the journalists about the preparations for the First European Conference on Minority and Local Media, which is to be held in Novi Sad in November of 2017.

We are committed to the mission of preserving the identity, the culture, and the language of our minority communities. Our role is therefore multilayered and largely specific. We can say that we are the pillar institutions of our communities. I think that, in Serbia, in Vojvodina, there is no dilemma that minority media must be supported by the state. We receive regular monthly subsidies from the Provincial Budget, which is always insufficient. We do not wait idle, instead we intensively and permanently look for modalities that will strengthen us and provide us with stability. The first Regional Minority Media Conference was organized five years ago with this in mind, to strengthen, and to increase visibility and presence of the minority media in the general public – Rozalija Ekres said.

Any dialogue striving to strengthen the position of the national minorities is very important and useful, particularly if it envisages harmonization of relations of all stakeholders in a social community. The importance of this conference can be seen in the fact that it has overgrown its original format and is becoming a European conference, which says a lot about the quality of the programs. The City tries

to make a maximum effort in its support to the culture and any diversity in this regard, and we have special segments that target minority media, which play an important role in the preservation and promotion of individual national identities – Dalibor Rožić noted.

As Djordje Vukmirović said, the support of the Provincial Government to

the state is necessary. To this end, we plan to allocate an additional RSD 3 million in our next call for proposals for the media providing information in the minority languages – Vukmirović said.

Nataša Heror said that the platform of the conference should stimulate the inter-sector dialogue in regard to the strengthening of the minority media. She announced that a new series of five, now European, conferences would be organized with the objective to continue, enhance, and enlarge this practice and to position Novi Sad as the center for development of the minority media. These conferences may also serve as a communication platform towards the minority communities in light within

the project “Novi Sad – The European Capital of Culture 2021”. Furthermore, the participants emphasized the importance of building public awareness on the importance of the accessibility of communication and information for people with disability, who are also considered to be the minority population in the society.

During the press conference, the post publication “Communities of the New Age”, which was created during the fifth regional conference on the minority and local media, was also presented to the public.



the information in the minority languages is the expression of the need to preserve the specter of diversity. He elaborated that, in addition to the subsidies for 22 newspapers in the amount of RSD 264 million, allocated through the national minority councils, there are additional RSD 6.2 million earmarked for the 36 media outlets that are privately owned or are part of the civil sector.

In the information system in Vojvodina, there are 230 media outlets, 60 of which are minority media. Their market is limited and the support from



Play and Learn against Prejudice

Source: RTS

The “Camp without Borders” was organized in Kanjiža for the third time as a part of the project “Promotion of Multiculturalism and Tolerance in Vojvodina”. In the town on the Tisa River, high school students, through different skills and knowledge games, learn how

This year’s Camp brought together nearly 150 students from 16 schools in Vojvodina. The languages spoken include Serbian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, and Slovak. Despite different languages, the participants communicate with each other without any problems.

Beach games, swimming pool games, orienteering. And use of team work to get new skills and knowledge.

Thus the students make new friends, and teachers get new students.

“They have already invited us to visit



to root out prejudice among peers from different nations. Their teachers help them in this process.

Although the town of Kanjiža is only 15 kilometres away from the Hungarian border, there are no borders in this town – at least there are not any in the camp where the high school students of different nationalities compete in the skills and knowledge games.

“The initiative has arisen from a simple idea that learning is the best way to overcome prejudice. One of the methods to achieve it is to organize competitions of this kind”, Bojan Gregurić of the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Regulations, Administration, and National Minorities noted.

The participants say that the competition is interesting, but also add that the most interesting activity in the camp is socializing.

Fifteen years old Tibor Lucak from Hungary, which has, for the first time, sent their representatives to the camp, assured us in this regard.

“With the organizers’ help, we have overcome language barriers easily, there is a student in every team who speaks both the Serbian and the Hungarian languages”, Tibor explained.

them in their home towns, they were our guests last year, too, and now I see them as my new students who live somewhere else”, Mladen Đuričić, teacher of the Serbian Language and Literature in the „Žarko Zrenjanin“ Grammar School from Vrbas, said.

Majority is here for the first time, but there are some who were glad to return to Kanjiža this year. To learn something new.

“Our nationality is not important. We are all the same here, we overcome the same obstacles”, Đuričić said.

The evidence of the good time the students have had in the Camp is how impatiently they wait for the next year to socialize again. In the meantime, they are focused on competition, as the winning team will be rewarded with a trip. Symbolically, it will be a trip abroad.



Sejdinović: Majority Power Centers Do Not Care About Information in Minority Languages

Source: Autonomy | Foto: Hlas Ijudu and with a lot of criminal activities”.

Uhe President of the Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina, Nedim Sejdinović, said that the majority power centers do not care about minority information, since, similarly to the minorities themselves, they see it as something exotic, and, at times, even hostile.

“Decision makers became more interested in minority information only after it had become evident that ignorant policies had catastrophic consequences, which has also become an international problem of Serbia, and that numerous minority and multilingual media outlets ceased to exist. And even now, when they are interested, they have no idea whatsoever what they should do and they repeat the same mistake, hoping that they will be able to solve it through inter-party and intra-party deals”, Sejdinović said for the Information portal “Far” from Dimitrovgrad, which provides information in the Serbian and Bulgarian languages.

He added that the issue of the information in minority languages should be approached with great sensitivity, as it both a media issue and the minority rights issue, arising from many international documents Serbia has ratified thus far.

He assessed that Serbian politicians see

media outlets as their personal PR instruments, and declare all media that resort to professional and critical reporting as “enemies who must be destroyed”.



“It seems that it will take a long time, many years, for the politicians to understand that the main role of the media in a democratic society is to report professionally and thus serve as a social and political corrective force and control the authorities in the interest of all citizens. If they ever understand it”, Sejdinović said.

He also added that he believed the state has to give up ownership in the media, but not in the way it has been doing it thus far: through “wild party purchases of the media outlets, without any control,

“It has become evident that the media sold in the public tenders have been only formally privatized, and that they are still favored in all ways by the local self-governments. Therefore, all goals of the privatization of the media have failed, and I cannot exclude the possibility that we will witness another formal reentrance of the state in the media again. Those who believe that the goal of the latter is to preserve the media make a huge mistake”, Sejdinović said.

He assessed that the process of the project co-financing has evolved into a mockery, as the project proposals are mainly judged by the commissions consisting of individuals deeply in the conflict of interest, who are there only to carry out the decisions coming from “the top” and allocate funds exclusively to the media close to the executive power, including those who constantly violate the Code of Contact of the Journalists of Serbia, “blowing citizens’ minds”.

Process of project co-financing is yet another story about the violation of the law and it shows that we, as the state, will never be a part of the civilized world unless, for a start, we commence to observe our own laws”, Nedim Sejdinović concluded.

The Coordination of the National Minority Councils Files Complaint in regard to the RAEM Members Appointment Procedure

Source: Bosniak National Council

On June 16, the Committee for Culture and Information of the Assembly of Serbia accepted the complaint of the Coordination of the National Councils of National Minorities about the procedural flaws in regard to the appointment of the RAEM member from the ranks of the national minorities, and issued decision that the appointment process should be repeated.

In early February, the Committee for Culture and Information convened in order

to ratify the list of candidates, which did not include a joint candidate of the national minority councils.

Subsequently, the Coordination of the National Minority Councils filed complaints with all relevant state institutions, due to the fact that the National Assembly did not act as provided by the Law and did not take any steps to ensure that the national minority councils submit the name of their candidate for a member of the Regulatory Agency for Electronic Media.

The Law on Electronic Media provides that the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia appoints members of the RAEM exclusively based on the proposals made by the authorized institutions, including the national minority councils.

The Coordination of the National Councils of the National Minorities, presided at the time by Sulejman Ugljanin, the President of the Bosniak National Council, selected their own candidates and forwarded the names of the candidates to the relevant Parliamentary Committee.

Round Table on the EU Accession and Enhancement of the Minority Policy and Inter-ethnic Relations

Source: Far

On June 1, Forum on Ethnic Relations organized a round table discussion “EU Accession and Enhancement of the Minority Policy and Inter-ethnic Relations in Serbia” at the Niš Media Centre, with support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The event was opened by Tanja Mišćević, the Chief Negotiator for the EU Accession, Edvin Sugarev, the Consul General of the Republic of Bulgaria

but also one of the most problematic issues in Serbia’s negotiations with the EU.

The round table featured debates on the two important issues in regard to the minority policy and the interethnic relations in Serbia. In the First Panel, the participants expressed views and exchanged experiences in regard to the Chapter 23 negotiations and implementation of the Minority Action Plan. In addition to Nenad Đurđević as the moderator, Jovica Pavlović, the

ences of the Croatian and Vlach national minorities in the country.

The Second Panel addressed the issue of democratic participation and participation of the national minorities in the public sector and public enterprises. Dušan Janjić was the moderator in this Panel, whereas the President of the Bujanovac Municipality, Šaip Kamberi, briefed the participants on the situation in Bujanovac, Preševo, and Medvedja. Dr Goran Bašić, director of the Institute of Social Sciences,

noted the importance and the need for an efficient participation of the national minorities in the public life, and the Director of the Centre for Regionalism, Aleksandar Popov, also took part in the debate as one of the key note speakers.

The event was brought to completion by the address of dr Zoran Milivojević, who noted that, whereas the round table has proven that such forums are indeed meaningful and useful, the situation on the ground mainly remains unchanged.

in Niš, Iva Kruleva, Deputy Chief of Mission and Counsellor at the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Serbia, and dr Dušan Janjić, from the Forum on Ethnic Relations. In his introductory address, Janjić briefed the participants on the project “Minority Policy in Serbia – Support to Integrations”, the round table was organized as a part of. It included the empiric research, i.e. interviews with the presidents and representatives of the national minority councils in Serbia. Sugarev and Kruleva noted the commitment of Bulgaria, as the EU member, to providing assistance and support to Serbia in its EU integrations and promotion of minority policy. Talking about her experience in the negotiations thus far, Mišćević described the issue of the national minorities in Serbia as one of the most interesting,

associate of the Forum on Ethnic Relations, also addressed this issue, presented the general overview of the situation in this regard, and briefly talked about the official use of the mother tongue and alphabet (issuance of documents in the mother tongue, court processing, etc.), democratic participation of the national minorities, inclusion of national minority representatives in the public sector and public enterprises, the status and functioning of the national minority councils, and the relations between the state and the national minorities. The key note speakers in this Panel were also Darko Sarić Lukendić, of the National Council of the Croatian National Minority, and Predrag Balašević, the President of the Vlach People’s Party from Bor, who talked about problems and experi-

He emphasized that not only are the minorities an important part of the society, but they are part of the political system, as well. He reminded that Serbia, as a future member of the EU, has important obligations with numerous aspects, which requires stricter and clearer recommendations. The moderators, Nenad Đurđević and Dušan Janjić, provided the summaries and the main conclusions of both panels. As they noted, on the basis of the discussion, the draft Analysis of the Action Plan, prepared by the Forum on Ethnic Relations, will be amended. The final document will be published and submitted to all key stakeholders that deal with the protection of the national minorities, enhancement of the minority policy, and embrace of the European legal values, in Serbia and abroad.



Exhibition “Mak Dizdar: The First One Hundred Years”

Source: Bosniak National Council

Uraditional Bayram reception was organized in the Main Office of the Bosniak National Council on June 28 to mark the Ramadan Bayram. On the occasion of the celebration of this important holiday of the Bosniak community in Serbia, the Council also organized the exhibition “Mak Dizdar: The First One Hundred Years”.

The exhibition was organized as a part of marking the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of a great Bosniak poet, Mehmedalija Mak Dizdar. The exhibition “Mak Dizdar: The First One Hundred Years” presents original manuscripts and documents from the Collection of Mehmedalija Mak Dizdar, preserved in the Museum of Literature and Theatrical Art of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the specially created interpretative materials and multimedia contents to show the visitors the most important aspects of life and the works



of the author, which are considered to be among the best of the Bosniak literature, such as the “Stone Sleeper”, “Blue River”, the “Old Bosnian Texts” anthology, etc. The visitors can also see Mak’s drawings and watercolours, original manuscripts of his most important works, unpublished poems, the li-

terary awards he received, etc.

The authors of the exhibition are Dr. Gorčin Dizdar, director of the “Mak Dizdar” Foundation, and Mr Đana Kukić, senior curator of the Museum of the Literature and Theatrical Art of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bunjevac Cultural Center “Tavankut” Presents the Queen of All Saints Tradition

Source: Bunjevci

On Sunday, June 4, the Bunjevac Cultural Center “Tavankut” presented the tradition of the Queen of All Saints. This folk tradition, which Bunjevacs brought from their ancient motherland, has been almost been forgotten, and the Bunjevac Cultural Center “Tavankut” decided to revive it in this village.

Eight little girls were dressed in white lace dresses, with colorful crowns on their head, decorated with beads, ribbons, and mirrors. Barefoot, escorted by shepherds, they walked around the village singing and visited four Tavankut homes that had their gates decorated and open.



The youngest girl – the Queen – was seated on a chair surrounded by the other girls, they all sang, and the host families presented them with gifts.

This tradition originates from the pagan times and was linked with the awakening of spring.

Round Table “Information in the Bulgarian Language” held in Dimitrovgrad

Source: www.far.rs



On June 2, the Internet Portal „Far“, the OSCE Mission to Serbia, the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Serbia, and the Independent Society of Journalists of Vojvodina, organized a round table on the “Information in the Bulgarian Language” at the Information and Education Centre in Dimitrovgrad.

The round table was opened by the Ambassador to the Republic of Bulgaria in Serbia, Radko Vljakov, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the OSCE to Serbia, Michael Uyehara, and the Mayor of Dimitrovgrad Municipality, Vladica Dimitrov. Emphasizing the importance of the event, Ambassador Vljakov noted in his address a number of problems in regard to the information in the national minority languages, and in the Bulgarian language in particular: an absence of information strategies, the minority media's focus on the issues of relevance to certain interest groups within the national minorities, the necessity to have an unbiased and accurate source of information, which should be particularly important to the minority media, as well as the lack of mechanisms for stable financing of the minority media.

Michael Uyehara noted that such debates are welcome in every society, as they represent the basis of the democratic process. The importance of the media, as he said, is in the fact that they drive and strengthen the dialogue within a community, and therefore, they should strive to secure the

pluralism of thoughts and speech, which contribute to the well-being of every society.

Reminding the participants in the round table that the right to be informed in one's mother tongue is guaranteed by the Constitution, Dimitrov made an overview of the situation in the information in the Bulgarian language in Dimitrovgrad, which has been, for more than 25 years, by the RTV Caribrod, and, since 2016, the Internet Portal „Far“, as well. He noted that the Bulgarian national minority in Dimitrovgrad

uses their right to information in the Bulgarian language, and that these media outlets receive 90% of funding from the local budget. To this end, he added, the question is what will happen in the future and whether the minority media can be economically sustainable at all.

The theme of the first panel was “The Information of the National Minorities – Overview of the Current Situation with the Emphasis on the Information in the Bulgarian Language”. The editor of the “Far” Portal, Petar Videnov, serving as the moderator, presented the overview of the media in Serbia that provide information in the Bulgarian language, noting that these media outlets should not consider each other as competitors, as they all work for the common cause. Meho Omerović, the Chairman of the Committee for Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality in the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia, noted the importance of the minority information in Serbia, and emphasized that the legislation on the protection of minority rights has been almost fully completed, and that the problem is in their implementation. In carrying out this complex and long process with many challenges, as he said, the important role lies with the media, as their mission, in addition to the informative function, is also to preserve the minority culture, language, and customs, and represent an expression of a group identity. Nino Brajović, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Information, presented the overview of the situation in





regard to the information in the national minority languages and announced that the RTS will start broadcasting information program in four minority languages later this year or in the beginning of next year. He also informed the participants on the idea of the Ministry of Culture and Information to create a special national channel in the minority languages, which would broadcast the most relevant media contents in the languages of the national minorities from the RTS production, as well as from other productions in Serbia.

Stefan Stojkov, the deputy president of the National Council of the Bulgarian National Minority, also took part in the debate and, within the panel on the Bulgarian language information strategy, informed the participant on the activities undertaken by the National Minority Council in the area of information, issued calls for proposals and the implemented projects, as well as an active campaign for survival of media in the privatization process, and the creation of the Nova RTV Bosilegrad. In the second part of the round table, the participants discussed the theme "Public Interest in the Information of a Local Community". The key note speaker was the president of the Independent Society of Journalists of Vojvodina, Nedim Sejdinović.

Noting that freedom and objectivity of the media are as equally important as their sustainability and funding, he referred to, as he said, certain deviations and retrograde processes in the area of information, such as the composition of expert commissions that evaluate projects, the relationship between the media and the government, the problem of protection of the



editorial policy of the minority media founded by the national minority councils, the principles and criteria used for allocation of funds in project financing, and other important issues.

The Councilman for Education and Information of the Dimitrovgrad Municipality, Dejan Milev, who talked about the plans for public information of the community based on the experience thus far, also addressed the issue of the education of the personnel employed in the media and noted the need to engage a number of philologists to perfect the Bulgarian language used by the journalists. Miroslav Nackov, the director of the RTV Caribrod, presented the work of the RTV Caribrod and the internet site created last year. He noted that the trend of information in the Serbian and Bulgarian languages has been

preserved after the privatization of the media, and that the emphasis has been put on the digitalization process, establishment of the cooperation with the Bulgarian national television, and the overall production enhancement. He also talked about a few problems, including the need to suspend the payment of VAT for the minority media, including the RTV Caribrod. Slaviša Milanov, representing the "Far" Portal, looked in to the ways the civil society can satisfy the needs of the community, the lack of evaluation and monitoring, which is of importance to all media, as well as the importance of a good communication between media and local self-governments, and the need to secure funding. Representatives of electronic, printed, and on-line media in the Bulgarian language from Dimitrovgrad, Bosilegrad i Niš, including the Internet Portal "Far", RT Caribrod, Radio Bosilegrad, "Glas Press" Portal, "Bjutelin" magazine, TV Kodal, and the "Novo Bratstvo" newspaper, as well as the representatives of the National Council of the Bulgarian National Minority, the cultural and information centres "Caribrod" i "Bosilegrad", the cultural and educational institutions, and civil society participated in the round table.

The round table initiated an active debate of all participants and opened themes that are yet to be tackled. To this end, Ambassador Vlajkov expressed hope that the participants will gather again in half a year to assess the progress made in solving the problems identified in the event and noted the importance of the commitment of all stakeholders to a constructive dialogue and joint engagement in resolving these issues.

The First Session of the Coordination Body for Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women

Source: Roma National Minority Council

Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia and the Minister of Construction, Traffic, and Infrastructure, Zorana Mihajlović, appointed by the Government to coordinate the work of the state institutions in regard to the promotion of the position of the Roma in Serbia, noted in today's first session of the Coordination Body for Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women, that the Government will ratify the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for 2016-2018 in its next session.

Deputy Prime Minister Zorana Mihajlović acknowledged that many things had been completed in the previous period. However, she added, as there is still much work to be done, the Government has formed the Coordination Body for the Implementation of Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women. She noted that the Roma in Serbia face major problems in regard to the health care, education, housing, and employment, and that the Action Plan that will tackle all these issues will be endorsed in the next session of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

The President of the National Council of the Roma National Minority, prof. Vitomir Mihajlović, thanked the Deputy Prime Minister for her engagement in the reso-



lution of the problems the Roma face. Mihajlović noted that it is necessary to include members of the Roma community in the executive power on all levels, in order to have them contribute as efficiently as possible to the resolution of the problems in regard to the education, health care, and employment of the Roma population.

The first session of the Coordination Body for Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women was attended by the following mem-

bers of this body: Tanja Miščević, Chief Negotiator with the EU, Miodrag Poleđica, State Secretary at the Ministry of Construction, Traffic, and Infrastructure, Suzana Paunović, Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Ivan Sekulović, manager of the Team for Poverty Reduction, Živojin Mitrović, Deputy President of the Roma National Minority Council and the Secretary of the Coordination Body, and Vitomir Mihajlović, the President of the Roma National Minority Council, as well as the members of the Expert-Operational Body: Dragana Jovanović-Arijas, Aleksandra Benković, Danijela Janković, Danijela Lakatoš, Dušan Jovanović, Miloš Mihajlović, Dragan Đorđević, Božidar Jovanović, Ivana Marksić, Osman Balić, and Aleksandra Petrović.

The participants in the session agreed to continue cooperation on the international projects in line with the process of Serbia's EU accession, and to prepare operational conclusions from the session that will be forwarded to all members of the Coordination Body and the Expert-Operational Body, in order to facilitate the preparation of the next session and the Fourth Seminar on Social Inclusion of the Roma Community in Serbia in organization of the European Commission.



The 46th Encounters under the Linden Trees

Photo: Hlas Ljudu



On Saturday, June 17, at the Slovak Cultural Centre "Pavel Jozef Šafarik" in Novom Sad, the 46th "Encounters under the Linden Tree", a traditional gathering of young writers and painters, who publish their works in the Youth Magazine "Vzlet", was organized.

The event was preceded by the opening of the art exhibition, which was, up to now, dominated by paintings and drawings. This year, however, photographs prevailed in the exhibition, which cartoonist Nikola Petkov assessed as expected, given the time we live in.

As in the previous festivals, the best young writers and painters were selected.

The panel that evaluated the visual art works consisted of Michal Djurovka, academic painter, Vladimir Valenčík, art critic, and Nikola Petkov, cartoonist. The panel awarded the paintings of Marina Jonaš from Kovačica,



which were bursting with colours, liveliness and a visible talent.

A three-member panel evaluated the literary works. As Marta Součková, the lector of the Slovak Language and Culture the Department of the Slovak Language of the University of Novi Sad, Marija Klapakova the literary critic from Slovakia, and Ladjislav Čanji, a

poet, the most successful young author was Hana Čížik from Kovačica. Adequate to her age, she wrote the prose, which showed great talent for dialogue construction, and the judges particularly praised her talent for creating atmosphere in her works.

In addition to socialising with the peers from whole Vojvodina, the Encounters under the Linden Trees Festival gives opportunities to the participants to get to know established writers. This year, one of the most popular writers of the teenager prose, Maria Kotvašova-Jonašova, met with the young artists. She

talked about her books and shared a few good tips with the young literary beginners that they will certainly use in their creative work.

This year's gathering was brought to completion in the Petrovaradin Tower, in the studio of the Slovak academic painter, Pavel Pop.

Ruthenian Community

Young Actors from Ruski Krstur Visit Slovakia

Source: Ruske Slovo



Youth Drama Group of the Drama Studio ART at the Cultural Centre Ruski Krstur, with the "First Party" play by Todo Nikoletić, directed by Ksenija Bodjanec, visited Slovakia from June 19 to June 21, to participate in the Theatrical Festival "Mihalov Boards".

The tour was organized on invitation by the Festival's organizer – East Slovakian Association "Village", and the host of the guest from Krstur was the president of this Association, Maroš Volovar.

Fourteen elementary school pupils, the play's director, technical support staff Saša Paljenkaš and Mihajlo Bodjaneš, and the President of the Executive Board of the Ruthenian National Minority Council, Željko Kovač, were accommodated in Zemplinka Teplica, and had two performances for their peers during the Festival, in Budkovcoh on June 20 and in



Zemplinka Teplica on June 21.

The hosts organized for their guests sight-seeing tours of the towns they performed in, an excursion to the Zemplinka Širava Lake, and, on their way back, a visit to Kosić, as well.

As the director Ksenija Bodjanec said, the performance of the young actors was outstanding and the audience understood

them and followed what was happening on the stage. This was a crown of a years-long work with this generation of actors, as most of them are about to finish the elementary school.

The visit to Slovakia was funded by the Cultural Centre, and the mini-van transportation was provided by the "Petro Kuzmjak" School and the Ruthenian National Minority Council.



Centar za istraživanja migracija
Center for Migration Studies

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