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july 2017



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HIGHLIGHT



Minister Ružić Meets with Representatives of the National Minority Councils

On July 25, in the Palace Serbia, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Branko Ružić, met with the representatives of the national minority councils in order to be informed about the activities of the national minority councils and the most important challenges they face in their work.



Delegation of the European Commission Visits the Office of Human and Minority Rights

On July 11, at the Palace Serbia, the Director of the Office of Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, met with the representatives of the Expert Mission of the European Commission, in order to exchange information on the measures taken for social inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia.



Renewal of German Culture

The German National Alliance, a non-political organization of the German minority in Serbia, with headquarters in Subotica, established cooperation with the City of Zrenjanin, where they opened an affiliate on July 5, which will evolve into a permanent office in the near future.

On this occasion, Rudolf Vajs, the organization's President, visited Zrenjanin with his associates, and, in the Town Hall, took part in the presentation of the activities and cultural events the GNA will organize in Zrenjanin.



The Exhibition "Browsing Time - Jewish Magazines in Serbia from 1888 to 2016" Opened in the National Library of Serbia

On July 21, the exhibition "Browsing Time – Jewish Magazines in Serbia from 1888 to 2016", by author Biljana Albahari, the NBS bibliographer, was opened in the National Library of Serbia. For the first time, all publications of the Jews in Serbia are presented in a chronological and comprehensive way.

EDITORIAL 38

Richness in Diversity

Dobar dan, mirëdita, jó napot, добър ден, bună ziua... Bunjevac Dužijanica, Ruthenian "Red Rose", unique Vlach customs, Roma music, colourful Slovak national costumes, kulen sausage from Petrovac... – are only few of the features of the multinational and multicultural mosaic of our country.

There is no need to emphasize that numerous minorities have lived in these lands together for centuries. Our politicians and numerous foreign visitors frequently point to this fact. The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is an unique example of multinational environment, and has been recognized as a "Small Europe" due to its exceptional composition.

With the objective to raise awareness of the general public on the richness of our country in diversities – linguistic, cultural, confessional, and on the importance of preservation of this exclusive fortune, the Office of Human and Minority Rights launched the campaign "Together We Are Serbia" on July 1.

The campaign has a promotional video, with participation of numerous members of national minorities in their traditional national costumes. The campaign will last until December 10, the International Day of Human Rights. On this day last year, the first Fair of National Minorities was organized by the Office of Human and Minority Rights. During this event, members of national minorities presented their culture, their gastronomy, their customs.

Although we started this editorial by festivals and customs, we should not create a false picture about the national minorities in Serbia. Lives of national minorities are far from being just about singing and dancing. Yes, many problems have been resolved, but there are quite a few that are still passed on from one year to another. These are the problems in the four fundamental areas: culture, education, information, and official use of language and alphabet. Will the expected amendments to the Law on the National Minority Councils and the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities facilitate eventual resolution of these problems is yet to be seen.

30 different national minorities live in Serbia



and ONE newsletter for all

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f Minority News Portal

National Identity Is Our Most Valuable Treasure

Photo: Andrász Orosz

According to the official data, 59% of the Hungarian national minority in Serbia live in its northern province, constituting absolute majority in some of the municipalities. These municipalities include Kanjiža, Ada, Senta, Bačka Topola, Čoka and Mali Idjoš. Subotica is the educational, cultural and political centre of the Vojvodina Hungarians, where the head office of the Hungarian National Minority Council is also located. We talked to the President of the Hungarian National Minority Council, Jenő Hajnal, for this issue of the Minority News.

Hungarian national minority is the largest minority in Vojvodina and Serbia. Can we say that it is the best organized minority, too?

The Hungarian minority is the largest in Vojvodina, it constitutes 13% of the overall population. The organization of our national minority arises from the need to resolve a number of issues, above all in the following four areas: culture, education, public information, and official use of language and alphabet, as provided by the Law on the National Minority Councils. Due to a large number of members of our community, we have numerous educational, cultural, and media institutions, and, in light of the aforementioned, we also have adequate administrative and legislative resources to manage and finance these institutions. The Hungarian National Minority Council has a broad network of collective bodies, from committees to consultative boards, and we try to engage as many members of our community as possible in the decision making process on all critically important issues. And critically important issues are all issues relevant for our community – from educational issues to problems in regard to the official use of our language.

Every national community is specific. What makes the Hungarian community different from the others, and what do you have in common with the other minorities?

The Hungarian community in Vojvodina believes that its national identity is its most valuable treasure. This is the reason why the largest number of members of our community registered in the special voters' registry, they run around 300 Hungarian cultural societies, enroll their children in classes in the Hungarian language, baptize their children, mark their national holidays... They live as Hungarians in their homeland. At the same time, the Hungarian community wants to cooperate with the majority community, with other minority communities, and build bridges between different languages and cul-



tures. Thus, the minority's essence, regardless of difficulties and conflicts, becomes a source of new values.

The Hungarian National Minority Council represents a stronghold in the life of Hungarian families, youth, pedagogues, Hungarian civil society, cultural associations, schools, theatres, libraries, and media. At the same time, by bridging the main obstacle to the accomplishment of members of national minorities – an isolation caused by the linguistic and cultural barriers, it represents a link between an individual, a member of the Hungarian national minority, and the public administration, between Hungarian families and schools, between Hungarian non-governmental organizations and fulfillment of their political objectives.

Although national minority communities are different in regard to their languages and culture, they share the same minority community fate. The Hungarian community is the largest and, as we mentioned, one of the best organized communities, with strong support from the mother country, both political

and financial, to the work of the National Minority Council and every individual who considers himself a member of the Hungarian national community. The support of the mother country and its geographical closeness are very important, and this is not something that all national communities have. Through its political representation, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, the Hungarian national community is included in all legislative bodies, from the National Assembly to municipal assemblies, as well as in the executive power bodies on the Republic, Provincial, and municipal level. We believe that this is very important, as, in resolving the issues of the community, we need to be present on all levels.

Many minorities have common problems – lack of text books in their mother tongue, shortage of media in their languages... Does the Hungarian community face similar problems, too?

Certainly, the problems are, if not the same, very similar, but the instruments for resolving these problems are different. For instance, the text book publishers in Serbia do not publish textbooks for professional/expert subjects in national minority languages, as the need for these textbooks is minimal, they are used by a small number of high school students, and as a result, the teachers use the textbooks in the Serbian language, and students use their notes when they study. It is not economically sustainable to translate these textbooks from the Serbian to the Hungarian language, and it would also take a very long time to do this. Therefore, the import of text books on these subjects from Hungary would be an adequate and efficient solution, provided that the approval procedure was simplified.

Every year, the minority communities face the problem of classes with small number of pupils. How has the Hungarian community managed to preserve these classes?

The problem of classes with insufficient number of pupils is the problem that all minorities face. The number of children diminishes

every year. We try hard to preserve every single class, our Council annually makes around 80 decisions on the support to creation of classes with less than 15 pupils, we coordinate our decisions with the Provincial Secretariat and the Ministry, and we manage to preserve a large number of these classes. However, we expect that the number of children will continue to decrease and we need to start searching for new solutions to this problem.

In the last few years, a large number of members of the Hungarian community have been issued passports of the Republic of Hungary. What kind of impact does it have on the number of Hungarians in Serbia?

Granting of Hungarian citizenship to Hungarians and other Hungarian-speaking residents in Vojvodina is a symbolic gesture, and represents the care of the motherland for the members of the community living abroad. Hungarian citizenship gives a number of conveniences in the motherland, the European Union, and in Serbia, since Hungary has also launch numerous programs of support to those who remain in the country of their birth. There is a years-long support in the sphere of education, from financial grants to preschool children to scholarships for students, since last year, there has been a program of economic support to entrepreneurs and farmers, as well as support to culture, religious and educational institutions. However, the young people continue to leave Serbia for the EU, predominantly due to economic reasons.

The support that comes from the motherland is visible, but in what way does the Council support the development of the Hungarian culture?

The National Council carries out its competencies in the cultural sphere as provided by the Law, declares the institutions of importance to the community, acts as a cofounder of institutions, protecting them this way, too, and participates in their funding from the literary and theatrical programs to the funding of prominent cultural events. In the cultural sphere, there are 39 institutions of particular importance; of these institutions, 10 have transferred the founding rights partially to the Council and a partial transfer of founding rights to the Council has been requested for additional 6 institutions; the number of Vojvodina treasures in the Vault of Hungarian Treasures is 64; the number of immovable historical heritage of special importance is 141; protection of values, creation of new values, and protection of the tradition.

What are the primary programs of the Hungarian National Minority Council in this period?

From the perspective of Vojvodina Hungari-

ans, the following issues are particularly important: national composition of employees in the public sector (the police, judiciary, prosecutor offices, public notaries, public enterprises, public administration); the financial support to the media reporting in the minority languages; the execution and protection of minority rights to be mandatory from the start of the accession to the EU; the need for constant EU monitoring of the implementation of the Minority Action Plan (namely, the implementation of the defined activities and execution of the minority rights); a systematic and effective work of the Serbian-Hungarian Intergovernmental Mixed Commission; establishment of far-reaching cooperation between the Hungarian National Minority Council and the Self-Government of the Serbs in Hungary.

Our primary program in the coming period is the program for the preschool institutions funded by the Hungarian Government in the amount of RSD 200 million. In addition to this program, all other programs, from the educational (scholarships, the "Europe" Student Campus, recognition of diplomas), cultural (increased number of titles and IT equipment of libraries, prominent events), information (equipment for printed media, equipment of electronic media), and the official use of language (change of names, legal aid) are continued to be implemented.

In May 2017, you took over the presidency in the Coordination of the National Minority Councils. We will make no mistake if we say that you are leading the Coordination at the time the most important decisions for the national minorities in Serbia are to be made, i.e., the new laws – on the National Minority Councils and the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of the National Minorities are in the pipeline, the implementation of the Minority Action Plan is in progress, as well as the reporting on it, etc. In what ways has the Coordination contributed to the preparation of the aforementioned documents thus far and are you personally satisfied with the participation in these processes?

The Coordination agreed on the common position and submitted proposals for amendments to the aforementioned documents, enabling a few national minority councils to give their own positions. Creation of the conditions for the accession to the European Union has been seen by the Coordination of the National Minority Councils, and the Hungarian national minority in Serbia as an extraordinary opportunity for implementation of necessary reforms in different parts of the society – from the judiciary to the education.

This is the reason why we see the solution to the implementation of the rights of national minorities in the EU integration process

in the Chapter 23, and particularly in the Action Plan for the Chapter 23, in the special Action Plan for Execution of Rights of National Minorities, and in our participation in the process of monitoring of the implementation of the envisaged activities.

The most important guarantee in this regard is a successful and comprehensive work of the national minority councils and a clear definition of their competencies and rights. For this to be achieved, it is critically important to draft and ratify a comprehensive Law on the National Minority Councils, applicable in all spheres of life.

In the beginning of last year, the Serbian Government endorsed the Minority Action Plan, the implementation of which will, we hope, guarantee an efficient, transparent, and responsible changes and implementation of the minority legislation.

What we fail to build firmly into our legal order, in the public administration system, in the institutional and the budgetary system now will only be possible to add by using political decision at a later stage. We want Serbia to become a full member of the European Union with a stable institutional background, undeniable rule of law, and full respect of the minority rights. We participate in Serbia's efforts as partners. This is exactly why we, the members of the Coordination of the National Minority Councils, have a duty to maintain closest relations possible with Serbian and European institutions and their officials, so that we can directly point to our view on the EU integration process and the position of the national minorities in Serbia. This is our duty, so that, following the accession negotiations, Serbia becomes a member of the EU with the strongest results in regard to the protection of the national communities. We need to take this time to strengthen the rule of law and the minority institutions system, institutional protection of minority rights, and, in practice, to create and develop a stable minority rights protection system that will be applicable and sustainable after Serbia's successful accession to the EU. If Serbia joins the EU with strengthened institutional framework for the protection of minority rights, guaranteed by the Constitution and the Law and reinforced by strong budgetary support, if the mechanisms for implementation of law are set in place, it will be very difficult to stop or reverse this process. I believe that this is our common goal.

Generally speaking, we are pleased with the level of participation in the preparation of all documents. We need a joint approach, and, if possible, a joint position of all national minority councils, which is not an easy thing to achieve since, as you know, there are 21 national minority councils in the Coordination.

Bošnjak: Amendments to Two Key Minority Laws to Be Completed in Autumn

Source: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government

State Secretary in the Ministry of Public Administration and the Local Self-Government, Ivan Bošnjak, expects that the amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities and the amendments to the Law on National Minority Councils will be ratified in autumn.



tions in regard to the amendments would be looked for in a dialogue with them, which also includes a full implementation of the Action Plan for the Chapter 23.

“We, as the Ministry, have the obligation to ensure that two key laws are endorsed this

autumn. Namely, these are the Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities and the Amendments to the Law on National Minority Councils”, Bošnjak said.

He explained that the new Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities will make easier to register one’s

nationality in the public records, in compliance with the Law on Protection of Personal Data, and, by amending other system laws, it will also enable better political participation of members of the national minorities and their employment in the public sector.

As he announced, the Law on the National Minority Councils will be amended to facilitate enhanced democratization of the national minority councils, better economic and financial management of the national minority councils, and their further depoliticization.

“Our idea is to include representatives of the national minority councils in these processes, and we also pay special attention to the dialogue with the nongovernmental organizations”, Bošnjak said.

Participants in the NDI Regional Roma Program Visit the Assembly of the AP of Vojvodina

Source: Assembly of the AP of Vojvodina

On July 21, a group of young Roma activists, the participants in the Regional Roma Program implemented by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) from Belgrade, paid a visit to the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

In the Regional Roma Program, NDI, in cooperation with the Roma national community, actively strengthens this community and educates young Roma leaders and activists. One of the objectives of the Program is to introduce them with the work of the state, provincial, and local institutions, bodies, institutes, and organizations.

On behalf of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the guests were received by the Chairman of the Assembly Committee for Appeals and Proposals, Goran Gonda, the Secretary General of the Provincial Assembly, Nikola Banjac, and the Assistant Secretary Ge-



neral of the Assembly, Dragutin Galović.

In a cordial and open conversation with the hosts, the participants in the Regional Roma Program of the National Democratic Institute were briefed on the competencies, organization, and method of work, functioning, and decision making in the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, on the work of the Secretariat of the Assembly, and the history of the building of Banski Dvor, where the Assembly is seated, which has been

listed as the cultural monument of extraordinary importance.

The hosts informed the guests about their personal experiences in regard to the work of the Assembly from the perspectives of a deputy in the Assembly, the Secretary General, and his deputy. Among other things, they assessed that the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in this mandate functions in a stable and good way and makes good results.

The participants in the Regional Roma Program of the National Democratic Institute thanked their hosts for the cordial reception and talks, noting that this visit was very important for them in their attempt to acquire new skills and experiences. After the visit to the Provincial Assembly, the participants in the Regional Roma Program had talks with the representatives of the City of Novi Sad.

Europe Insists on Rights of National Minorities – Serbia Respects These Rights

Source: www.far.rs

For ten years Bulgaria has been a member of the European Union, its gross national product has been increased seven times. Therefore, there is not a single reform, a single deprivation, a single challenge must not be an obstacle to the accession to the EU, because the benefits the citizens will receive from the EU membership cannot be compared with any sacrifice on this road, Ekaterina Zaharieva, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs said in her opening statement at the Forum "Minority Policy – Enhancement of Integrations in Serbia", which was organized on July 25.

She added that Serbia, too, following Bulgaria's example, should carry out all reforms for the sake of its own citizens, and not for the purpose of meeting formal requirements or getting a date. Bulgaria, which will preside over the European Union 2018, is Serbia's closest friend and all interlocutors I have met in the last two days, starting from the President, are well aware of this fact, Zaharieva concluded.

The right of national minorities to use their mother tongue was addressed in the meeting with the Serbian Minister of Justice, Nelom Kuburović, particularly in regard to the equal use of these languages in the court practice, Minister Zaharieva, who is in charge of the judicial reform in the Bulgarian Government, added.

Dr Dušan Janjić, who was the key note speaker and one of the authors of the study "Minority Policy – Enhancement of Integrations in Serbia", which served as the basis for the discussion, agreed with Minister Zaharieva. He expressed belief that the road to Europe is not a trade deal, and we need to use this corpus in the negotiations for our own benefit. In this process, we need to come up with a coherent minority policy, and it will take us three to five years to reach this goal, Janjić said.



Dr Zoran Milivojević, the moderator at the forum, in addition to the education and media related problems, pointed out economic problems as particularly difficult for the national minorities in Serbia, and the Bulgarian minority in particular.

Representatives of Serbian authorities, and Ivan Bošnjak, the state secretary in the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government, described the exchange of practices in the EU integration in the best possible terms.



državni sekretar u Ministarstvu za državnu upravu i lokalnu samoupravu, u superlativima je govorio o razmeni iskustava u evrointegracijama. The address of Brankica Janković, the Commissioner for Protection of Equality was in a similar tone. The session was attended by the newly elected Ombudsman of Serbia, Zoran Pašalić, and his colleague from Vojvodina, Dr Zoran Pavlović.

In the second part of the discussion, the representatives of the national minority councils and the non-governmental organizations took the floor.

The President of the National Council of the Bulgarian National Minority in Serbia, Vladimir Zaharijev, cordially thanked President Vučić, PM Brnabić and the Government of the Republic of Serbia for everything they

have done for this minority. He also expressed deep appreciation to the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Belgrade. He noted that printing of the majority of the textbooks in the Bulgarian language has just been finished and showed one set of textbooks to the other participants in the event. He also noted that, together with the representatives of other national minority councils, he had a fruitful meeting with the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Branko Ružić, and talked about the newspaper

"Bratstvo" as of a good example of information in the mother tongue, what some of other attendees strongly objected.

The round table was organized by the Forum on Ethnic Relations from Belgrade and the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Belgrade, with support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Minister Ružić Meets with Representatives of the National Minority Councils

Source: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government

On July 25, in the Palace Serbia, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Branko Ružić, met with the representatives of the national minority councils in order to be informed about the activities of the national minority councils and the most important challenges they face in their work.

After the introductory greeting, Minister Ružić reminded the attendees that the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government worked on the one of the most important documents in the area of protection of national minority rights – the Action Plan for Execution of Rights of Members of the National Minorities – which had been envisaged in the process of the accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union in the negotiating Chapter 23.

“As far as I am informed, in addition to the representatives of the state institution, civil society organizations, and representatives of the international organizations, it was you, the representatives of the national minority councils who provided the significant contribution in creation of this document”, the Minister said and added that he expects the representatives of the national minority councils to continue to participate in the next phases

– in the implementation of activities, preparation and control of reports, and thus contribute to the overall enhancement of the position of their communities.

The Minister noted that the national minority councils also participated in the preparation of the Draft Law on

the Council for National Minorities held on May 23, 2107, the Draft Program for Allocation of Funds from the Budgetary Fund for National Minorities was unanimously endorsed. The Program identifies the information in the national minorities languages as a priority area, and the programs and projects from this particular area will

be funded from the Budgetary Fund for National Minorities in 2017”, Minister Ružić emphasized and added that the Ministry is in the final stage of preparation of the Guidelines that will define the method of establishing composition and number of members of the Commission, which will carry out the competition in line with the Law and the Direction.

Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, and that they actively participate in the work on amendments to the Law on National Minority Councils. He added that this is a joint task, since the Ministry wants this legislation to be ratified in a participative and inclusive process and that solutions for certain issues are jointly found in a constant dialogue.

“The important issue, which has been moved from a deadlock in the last two years, is the Budgetary Fund for National Minorities. In the meeting of

Minister Ružić noted that, although a significant progress has been made thus far, he is aware that there is still je space for further enhancement of the legislative framework and implementation of the laws, that some problems can be resolved in a shorter time, and that there are open issues that request commitment and mutual understanding and confidence. He concluded that, because of this reason, it is important to make sure that the Government of the Republic of Serbia and representatives of the national minorities act as partners in this process.



Delegation of the European Commission Visits the Office of Human and Minority Rights



On July 11, at the Palace Serbia, the Director of the Office of Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, met with the representatives of the Expert Mission of the European Commission, in order to exchange information on the measures taken for social inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia.

Paunović noted that the issue of the Roma inclusion is one of the top priorities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, adding that Serbia has a good legislative and strategic framework in the sphere of Roma inclusion.

She pointed out that our state meets all commitments in the process of negotiations for Serbia's accession to the European Union, as well as commitments assumed in regard to the implementation of the Operational Conclusions made in the seminars with the European Commission since 2011. She also added that our goal is to enable jointly the citizens of Roma nationality to execute their rights guaranteed by the law, strategies, and the international documents, in an easier and more efficient way.

Paunović informed the experts that the previous period was marked by strengthening of the institutional capacity on the levels of the Government and the local self governments. By establishing the Government's Coordination Body for Roma Inclusion, not only will the policies for Roma



inclusion be synchronized, but their implementation will be monitored in practice, Paunović said.

By endorsing the new Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia until 2015, the Government has shown a clear commitment to address the inclusion of the Roma population in a comprehensive way. The new Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan recognize local self governments as key implementers. To this end, she explained, in cooperation with the Permanent Conference of Towns and Municipalities and the Roma National Minority Council, the intention of the state is to pay more attention to the local self governments, strengthening of their capacities, and appropriation of funds for Roma inclusion policy in local communities.

Representatives of the Expert Mission of the European Commission in charge of social inclusion of Roma, Ian Balazs and Kon-

stantinos Nifas, were particularly interested in the monitoring of the Action Plan for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia.

The Director of the Office of Human and Minority Rights explained to the experts that the monitoring of the implementation of the Roma inclusion policies had been secured even before the Action Plan was ratified, under the Action Plan for the Chapter 23, and through the reporting on the implementation of the Operational Conclusions from the Seminar on Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia, as well as the reports on the implementation of the Strategy with the support of the Task Force for Roma Integration 2020.

Representative of the Roma National Minority Council, Živojin Mitrović, noted that the Roma have participated fully in the preparation of the Strategy and the Action Plan, emphasizing the good level of cooperation with the Government of Serbia in the efforts to improve the position of the Roma population.

In addition to the Director of the Office of Human and Minority Rights, the meeting was also attended by the representatives of the Roma National Minority Council, the Ministry for Labour, Employment, Veteran, and Social Affairs, the Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction, and the EU Delegation to Serbia.

Paunović Meets the Delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe



On July 18, Suzana Paunović, the Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights of the Government of the Republic of Serbia met with members of the Delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Director Paunović informed the Delegation, consisting of Ms. Maria Guzenina (Finland), Mrs Samad Seidov (Azerbaijan), Ms. Sylvie Affholder (Secretary of the PACE Monitoring Committee), Mr. Tim Cartwright (Head of the CoE Office in Serbia) and Ms. Mona Alghaith (Assistant to the Head of the CoE Office

in Serbia), on the jurisdiction of the Office for Human and Minority Rights and the overall human rights situation in Serbia.

Briefing the guests on the ongoing activities of the Office, Paunović particularly noted the cooperation with the civil society organizations, focusing on the elements of mutual support and cooperation in the working groups and projects for enhancement of the position of the minority communities in Serbia.

Furthermore, Paunovićeva briefed the members of the delegation of the Parliamentary

Assembly of the Council of Europe on the Government's activities in regard to the social inclusion of Roma men and women in Serbia, and on the results of the implemented initiatives and projects the Office has actively been working on in regard to the improvement of the position of this minority community.

The Director of the Office also answered the questions asked by the member of the Delegation, who were particularly interested in the problems of the Roma population in regard to the issuance of personal documents, housing, and support to the civil society.

“The Rose” – the Symbol and the First Association of Ruthenians

Source: Ruske slovo

The formal concert “In the Middle of a Broad Valley” at the 56th Festival of the Ruthenian Culture “The Red Rose”, on July 1, was jointly opened by the President of the Ruthenian National Minority Council, Slavko Rac, the President of the Municipal Assembly of Kula, Velibor Milojević, and the Deputy Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Information, and Relations with Religious Communities, Dr Nebojša Kuzmanović, as well as the



personal relations in Kula have been recognized and cherished as its most valuable fortune. To this end, it is not a surprise that the local self-govern-

a local, but the national wealth as well.

The Deputy Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Information, and Relations with Religious Communities, Dr Nebojša Kuzmanović, passed the Ruthenians and the festival best regards from the Provincial Prime Minister, Igor

Mirović, and announced that he will take certain steps to ensure that “The Red Rose” has its status and value confirmed on the Provincial level, as well. As he said, a list of cultural events in the Province will be made, and clear criteria will be used to select the events that possess tradition, quality, and importance, and added that “The Rose”, judging by what he has seen, clearly belongs to this category.

In addition to the aforementioned, MP Olena Papuga, Assistant Provincial Secretary for Economy and Tourism, Mr Sergej Tamasz, members of the Ruthenian National Minority Council and its Commissions and bodies, leaders of the Ruthenian institutions and media, representatives of the church



representatives of the institutions that are principal organizers and funders of this biggest and oldest Ruthenian festival.

The President of the Ruthenian National Minority Council, Slavko Rac, noted in his opening statement that he was assured numerous times that many people from other communities and the state institutions associate “The Red Rose” with the Ruthenians, and this entails even more responsibility to maintain the achieved artistic level of “The Rose”.

The President of the Municipal Assembly of Kula, Velibor Milojević, greeted the attendees and reminded that multi-ethnicity and good inter-



ment has been the principal sponsor of “The Red Rose” for many years. He called both the Provincial and the Republic institutions to support the “Rose” in a similar way, as it not only

and local community in Ruski Krstur, and the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Ukrainian Embassy in Belgrade, Evgenia Filipenko, delegations from Perechin and Zemplinske Teplice

Krstur has the signed cooperation agreements with, received warm welcome from the audience at the formal concert.

The fifty-sixth Festival of the Ruthenian Culture in Ruski Krstur started in the court of the School "Petro Kizmjak" on Friday, June 30, by opening of the exhibition of the paintings from the Gallery of the Naive Art in Kovačica, and two additional events were organized the same day – children event "The Red Bud" and "The Echoes of the Valley", in which Aleksandra Ruskovski from Ruskog Krstura received award for the most beautiful female voice, whereas Marko Buila from Kucura



was awarded as the most beautiful male voice. In the remaining program featured performance by eleven cultural and artistic societies.

On Saturday, July 1, the Krstur Fair of Old Crafts was organized in the Craftsmen Home, which presented a

number of old crafts and products made by the local entrepreneurs, whereas an International Volleyball Tournament was organized at the gym, which was won by the team from Perechin, Ukraine. .

In the evening, a Recital was organized at the School court, with participation of the Poddukljan Artistic Folk Group from Preshova in Slovakia, Their performance was preceded by the Mixed Choir of the Cultural Centre Ruski Krstur and Cathedral St. Nicholas Church from Krstur, the Choir "Harmony" from Novi Sad, the Folk Group of the Krstur Cultural Centre, and the folk and musical group of the Cultural Artistic Society "Serbia" from Kula.

At the end of the program, the participants enjoyed in the performance of the Tamburitza Orchestra "Ravnica" from Subotica.



Ruthenians and Development of Novi Sad

Source: Rutenpres



In the Third Program of Radio Novi Sad, which also broadcasts program of the Desk in the Ruthenian Language, the broadcasting of the series "Ruthenian Contribution to the Development of Novi Sad" commenced on July 7, 2017.

The series consists of ten 20-minute radio shows, and it is an independent production supported by the Novi Sad City Directorate for Culture. The series presents 10 prominent individuals, who in their own branches contributed to the development of Novi Sad in the last fifty years.

In the radio shows, the residents of Novi Sad, their neighbours and colleagues, talk about these prominent individuals. The people the series talks about are Pavle Žilnik, famous architect, Miroslav Plančak, university professor, Miroslav Vislavski, sports worker, Miron Kanjuh, writer, Irina Hardi Kovačević, journalist, poetess, and writer, Melanija Rimar, journalist and children poetess, Irina Davosir Matanović, opera singer, Ivan Kovač, composer, Đura Paparhaji, writer, i Mihail Dudaš, famous athlete.

The Series prepared by the member of the Ruthenian Journalist Association

(TJS) is very interesting for the Ruthenian community, as it shows how much its members contributed to the development of Novi Sad. At the same time, the series could not include all Ruthenians who selflessly built themselves into the development of this town.

"We expect this series to continue", the editor of the Ruthenian Desk of the Radio Novi Sad, Tatjana Beuk Latjak said. .

As she said, this program can be followed live on Internet, on frequencies 92,1 i 107,1 Mhz, and on delayed broadcasting of the Radio Novi Sad.

Greek Cultural Artistic Society ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΠΑΡΑΔΟΣΗ in the Heart of Belgrade

Source: National Council of the Greek National Minority



On July 4, the National Council of the Greek National Minority hosted the Cultural Artistic Society from Athens, Ilion.

In the heart of Belgrade, in the Kneza Mihaila Street, members of the cultural artistic society from Athens presented a traditional Greek folk dance dressed in rich costumes.

On behalf of the Greek National Minority Council, Vasilios Proveggios, the President of the Executive Board of the Council, greeted the audience, which also included many members of the Greek community in Serbia.



Slovak Community

The Province Refuses to Fund Theatre Plays in the Slovak Language

Source: Hlas ľudu



Although the Slovak Vojvodina Theatre (SVT) in Bački Petrovac has had a regular financial support for two theatre premieres in a calendar year from the relevant Provincial Secretariat since it was founded in 2003, the situation has changed this year.

Following completion of the public competition for funding organized by the Provincial Secretariat for Culture, Public Information, and Relations with Religious Communities, the SVT received a letter signed by the Secretary, Miroslav Štatkić, informing them that all their project proposals for 2017 have been rejected, i.e. they will not receive any financial support for the theatre play and for the organization of the "22nd Petrovac Theatre Days" festival.

After we had celebrated the 150th anniversary of the theatre last year, this year we have a new reality the Director Viera Krstovska informed the public about in the press conference organized at the SVT



premises on July 5. She explained that expenses in regard to the maintenance of the SVT building and salaries of the already reduced staff – consisting of only three employees at the moment- are funded by the Municipality of Bački Petrovac. In other words, we have a form, but not contents.

The traditional theatre festival will take place from September 22 to September 26 with support received from the Municipality, the Republic, the Office for Slovak Diaspora, sponsors, but the premiere planned by host will not be performed this year.

The SVT management and the Executive Board attempted one more time to get financial support from the Province after the rebalance of the budget, but they have not received any reply yet. They informed the Slovak National Minority Council, the Slovak Heritage Foundation in Serbia, Slovak MPs in the Provincial Parliament, and the representatives of the state institutions of the Slovak Republic about the situation, with a plea for help to this institution, as, with the current dismissive attitude of the Provincial Government, the professional theatre of Slovaks in Serbia is doomed to disappear.

It is up to us, and the Slovak cultural public in particular, to decide whether we will only observe this in silence and acknowledge that a representative theatre institution of the Slovaks in Serbia has been lost for good, in the situation when there is plenty of money for cultural activities in the Provincial budget. The question is who the recipients of these funds are and what the objectives of such a distribution are.

Protection of All Rights is Priority

Source: Hrvatska riječ

Uhe position and status of the Croatian national minority is a priority issue for the Government of Croatia, which will insist, through cooperation and on the political level, on the protection of all rights provided by the agreements made with Serbia, the Croatian Government press release noted following the meeting between the Prime Minister, Andrej Plenković, and the representatives of the Croatian minority in this country. As it was elaborated in the press release, Plenković discussed the position of the Croats in Serbia and the problems and challenges they face with the President of the Democratic Union of Croats in Vojvodina and a MP in the Serbian Parliament, Tomislav Žigmanov, and with the President of the Croatian National Council, Slaven Bačić, in the meeting in Banski dvori.

„We have continued the practice of having regular meetings with the highest leaders in Croatia, with whom we exchange the information on the issues of importance for the life of the Croatian community in Serbia. These are issues in regard to the social position of the Croatian community in Serbia, the problems we face in implementing our legitimate interests, predominantly in the sphere of the minority rights, and

our expectations from Croatia. To this end, this meeting was very important for us, as it took place immediately before the Serbian President's visit to Dubrovnik. We also find it very important that we had the opportunity to in-



roduce ourselves to the new Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Marija Pejčinović-Burić, and agreed on the framework for future cooperation“, Tomislav Žigmanov said.

Position and status of the Croatian national minority is the priority issue for the Croatian Government, which will insist, through cooperation and on the political level, on full protection of all rights provided by the agreements

made with Serbia, the press release noted. The Croatian Government, via its Central State Office for Croats outside the Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, maintained continued dialogue

with the representatives of the Croatian community in Serbia. The Government has various projects and programs that support strengthening and development of the Croatian national minority.

In addition to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Marija Pejčinović-Burić, and the Head of the State Office for Croats outside the Republic of Croatia, Zvonko Milić, also participated in the meeting.

Croats Still Exposed to Discrimination

As a part of their anti-discriminatory activities, representatives of the OSCE Mission to Serbia visited the Croatian National Council in Subotica. The OSCE is preparing the guidelines and recommendations to the state bodies, so that they can respond in more adequate in the case of discrimination. The representatives of the OSCE Democratization Department, Jelena Jokanović i Katarina Sabadoš, were interested in the issue of the minority groups discrimination in Serbia.

Darko Baštovanović, the President of the Croatian National Council's Commission for Minority Rights Violation, noted that the Croats in Serbia, two decades after the conflict in the former SFRY was brought to closure, still face a high level of discrimination.

“There are many cases of discrimination. We presented the case of a young man of Croatian nationality, Josip Bukovac from Senta, as an example of an ethnical stereotype, which can eventually result in serious physical injuries. As I am from Srem myself, I know that Croats there feel too intimidated even to report an ethnically based abuse“, Baštovanović said.

As he added, the reactions of the relevant bodies are not adequate, as they do not list these incidents as ethnically motivated in their reports.

The Croatian National Council carries out monitoring of cases of discrimination of Croats, but they lack funding to be able to do this job well.

“It would be good if we had money to

carry out an adequate monitoring of discrimination cases that we would present to the public. For example, the Serbian minority in Croatia receives funding from the state budget for publishing of a report on ethnically motivated incidents against members of this community“, Baštovanović said.

Baštovanović believes in the EU integration process as the process that will regulate the Serbian society as a whole and hopes that discrimination cases will be made public and responded to in an adequate manner by the relevant institutions.

In addition to Darko Baštovanović, the OSCE representatives also met with the President of the Croatian National Council, Slaven Bačić, and the MP in the Republic Parliament, Tomislav Žigmanov.

National Councils Should Be Treated as Legitimate Partners

Source: Bosniak National Council

Un the July 25 meeting the national minorities' representatives had with Minister Branko Ružić in Belgrade, the President of the Bosniak National Council, dr Sulejman Ugljanin, noted the need to have the national councils treated as legal and legitimate partners in the future and to make sure that proposals provided by the national minority representatives are incorporated in both national minority law drafts.

"It is also necessary to ensure that the proposals made by the national councils are incorporated in the Minority Action Plan and that measurable indicators are put in place for monitoring of the implementation of the Minority Action Plan.

Specifically, in regard to the issues of im-



portance to the Bosniak community, to include in the Minority Action Plan the state's obligation to resolve the cases of the missing Bosniaks, mass abductions, and other crimes committed over Bo-

sniaks in Sanjak in the nineties, and to envisage the establishment of institutions and mechanisms that would prevent similar incidents in the future", President Ugljanin noted.

All Obstacles in Printing of Textbooks in Bosnian Language Removed

Un the meeting of the Bosniak National Council representatives with the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development, and the Textbook Institute, which was organized in Belgrade on July 27, an agreement was reached in regard to the terminology defining the national and cultural identity of the Bosniaks, including the Sanjak-related terminology, and their use in the textbooks in the Bosnian language. The Minister committed to passing the information on the agreed provisions to the Government of the Republic of Serbia in order to have them endorsed by the Government.

The participants in the meeting also assessed which provisions of the Memorandum have been implemented thus far and the status of the preparation of the missing textbooks in the Bosnian language, and agreed that pupils in the Bosnian language classes should be provided with the majority of the textbooks in the Bosnian language by the beginning of the 2017/2018 school year, as envisaged by the Memorandum and the

On July 18, Esad Džudžo, Deputy President of the BNC, sent a letter to the Minister of Education and Technological Development, Mladen Šarčević, and to the Director of the Textbooks Institute, Dragoljub Kojčić, expressing expectations that the obligations assumed by signing of the Memorandum on Publishing of the Textbooks in the Bosnian Language, and the Annex to the Memorandum, will be carried out.

Annex to the Memorandum on the Publishing of Textbooks. The Memorandum provides that the missing textbooks and

textbooks appendices are prepared and printed by the public publishing company, the Textbook Institute, in cooperation with the Bosniak National Council and the Ministry of Education.

The Minister of Education informed the Council's representatives that the President of the National Council of Education, Prof Dr Aleksandar Lipkovski, and the president of the Institute for Promotion of Education and Upbringing, Prof Dr Zoran Avramović, had been dismissed from these positions.

The Textbook Institute was represented in the meeting by Dragoljub Kojčić, the CEO and the Editor-in-Chief of the Institute, Milorad Marjanović, the Director of the Publishing Department, and Editor Vesna Pajević.

On behalf of the Bosniak National Council, the meeting was attended by the Council's Deputy President, Esad Džudžo, the President of the Executive Board, Hasim Mekić, and the President of the Education Committee, Bajro Gegić.

The Exhibition “Browsing Time - Jewish Magazines in Serbia from 1888 to 2016” Opened in the National Library of Serbia

Source: Association of Jewish Municipalities of Serbia



On July 21, the exhibition “Browsing Time – Jewish Magazines in Serbia from 1888 to 2016”, by author

Biljana Albahari, the NBS bibliographer, was opened in the National Library of Serbia. For the first time, all publications of the Jews in Serbia are presented in a chronological and comprehensive way.



that time: Oto Bihalji-Merin, Stanislav Vinaver, Rafajlo Blam, Sima Karaoglanović, etc. cooperated with the editors of these magazines. The information on the annual magazine “Meranos”, which was published from 1907, is particularly important. It was published by the Jews from Kruševac who had converted to orthodox Christian religion.

The Exhibition follows Jewish publications through the period of 130 years, from the first published magazine “El amigo del pueblo” (“The People’s Friend”), which was printed in Belgrade in 1888, to the present time. Seventy-six newspapers, magazines, collections, almanacs, and calendars are presented in the exhibition. The exhibits are divided in several sections, with a special seg-

ment consisting of six publications that Jews from Serbia issued abroad.

The Exhibition’s catalogue, among other things, provides an interesting overview of three magazines published by Jews in German and Italian prisons and camps during the WWII. The prominent public figures of

The exhibits and the accompanying catalogue contribute to completion of the Serbian national periodicals bibliography and represent a valuable source for studies of Jewish heritage in our country and Europe as a whole.

The Exhibition will be open until September 23.

Hungarian Community

Plans for Establishment of Digitalization Department

Source: Magyar szo



Library “Szarvas Gábor” from Ada successfully applied for funds for digitalization, stage lighting, acquisition of books in the Hungarian language, performance of plays in the Hungarian language, in the competition organized by the Hungarian National Minority Council, the “Szekeres Laslo” Fund, and the “Bethlehen Gábor” Fund.

Áron Csonka, the Director, said that the most important issues are development, digitalization, theatre lighting, and acquisition of books in the Hungarian language.

- We received 521,000 dinars for digitalization and the accompanying activities from the Ministry of Culture. In August, we plan to procure computers, scanners, a digital data base and accompanying software, everything will be installed in September and October, and librarians will be trained by the staff of the Vojvodina Hungarian Cultural Institute. We would like to digitalize old and unique books

from our library, as well, and the historic documentation of our town, to preserve them for future generations. We would then continue with the digitalization of the books from the obligatory reading list in the elementary and high schools, and to make them available online as well. Long term plans include making profit by digitalizing documents for other institutions, the Director said and added that, the second most significant grant, in the amount of 700,000 forints, was received in the competition organized by the “Bethlehen Gabor” Fund. We plan to invest this amount in the new lighting system of the stage at the theatre, which will make the performances become of higher quality and more spectacular.

The third important investment will come to life thanks to the Hungarian National Minority Council, which will donate books in the Hungarian Language to the “Szarvas Gábor” Library in the amount of one million forints. As Áron Csonka said, there are 31,533 books in

the Hungarian language and 26,015 books in the Serbian language in the library at the moment. He also noted that, through the Márai Program, they try to obtain additional books in the Hungarian language. He believes that the problem is in the local self government appropriated only 50 percent of the funding for restoration of the cultural institutions compared to the previous year.

They applied in numerous competitions and received few grants, which were small but important for them. From the Szekeres Laslo and Bethlehen Gabor Fund they received 150,000 forints for plays in the Hungarian language.

The Provincial Secretariat for Culture donated 28, 000 dinars for purchase of books and 30,000 for a technical exhibition, linked to the day of Hungarian photography. The Hungarian National Council donated 50,000 dinars for organization of the Days of Language Culture Szarvas Gábor.

Czech-Serbian Friendship Race

Source: Škola plus

As a traditional event, the “Czech-Serbian Friendship Race”, the seventh international bicycle caravan was organized this year under the patronage of the Embassy of the Czech Republic and the Ministry of Trade, Tourism, and Telecommunications.

The objective of the bicycle caravan is promotion of the Czech culture in these territories and the promotion of a healthy life style. 113 bicyclists, from 6 to 76 years old, took part in the caravan despite extremely high temperatures, which was a striking evidence of how important and socially useful tourist event the caravan has evolved into.

In addition to the safe and secure ride to Češko Selo, with the police escort and security personnel provided by the organizers, numerous participants had an opportunity to visit the Czech Museum, get the information on the Czech presence in the area and remind themselves how important it is to cherish the multi-cultural society and tolerance. Joyful and pleasant environment, smiles of the youngest participants and their parents, friends, and associates, with light food, refreshment, recreation and creative workshops are good evidence that we are creating a better society by strengthening inter-ethnic confidence among the young people.

The organizers’ monitoring panel selected participants who acted in line with the safe ride agreement, those who helped other participants, and also declared the youngest and the oldest bicyclists. The

logue. Furthermore, Škola plus promotes positive values from the common history of the two nations and interweaving of the two cultures, and also contributes to better knowledge of the characteristics



award ceremony was also an incentive to all participants to make sure that they are more conscientious bicyclists next year and also to pass their positive experiences to the others around them.

The important contribution of the bicycle caravan is promotion of awareness on the need to engage in the interethnic dia-

logue of the Czech minority. Young people are thus inspired to think and act in the spirit of tolerance. The objective of this event to bring the participants of different ethnic background together and help cultural and linguistic barriers to be overcome, promoting, at the same time, the values of importance of the cultural identity of the Czechs in Serbia.

German Community

Renewal of German Culture

Source: Danas

The German National Alliance, a non-political organization of the German minority in Serbia, with headquarters in Subotica, established cooperation with the City of Zrenjanin, where they opened an affiliate on July 5, which will evolve into a permanent office in the near future.

On this occasion, Rudolf Vajs, the organization’s President, visited Zrenjanin with his associates, and, in the Town Hall, took part in the presentation of the activities and cultural events the GNA will organize in Zrenjanin.

– Cultural activities will mark the beginning of our cooperation. The idea is to organize a free school of the German language, to organize exhibitions, and represent activities of the German minority in our town. We expect this cooperation will open doors for our associations and our town with the representatives of the state institutions in Germany, as this is what this Alliance has already done in Subotica, the Deputy Mayor, Saša Santovac said. The German National Alliance is an intermediary with all national communities in Serbia, and also provides a practical support to citizens in administrative affairs.

– Zrenjanin should regain the status of the German cultural centre in Banat. bi trebalo da vrati poziciju kulturnog centra Nemaca u Banatu. Furthermore, we are here to provide support in regard to current issues, such as the issue of grants in the amount of 2,500 Euros each, which the German Government allocated for every member of the German community persecuted because of their ethnic background since WWII, and sentenced to hard labour or sent to a camp. The deadline for submission of applications is December 31, 2017. Our liaison office will help applicants to fill the forms out, Rudolf Vajs said.



Centar za istraživanja migracija
Center for Migration Studies

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