

Information in Minority Languages Continues to Be a Priority of the Budget Fund for Minorities

Increased Funds for Co-Financing Newspapers in the Languages of National Minorities

43 Minority News

february 2018



Saša Verbič: Our Focus Is On Preservation of Our Identity

The Vojvodina School of Interculturalism Starting

"Prešern's Day" Marked in Kovin

HIGHLIGHTS



Information in Minority Languages Continues to Be a Priority of the Budget Fund for Minorities

On Wednesday, February 14th, a session of the Council for National Minorities was held, chaired by the Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabić. It was decided in the meeting that, in 2018, information in the languages of national minorities would remain a priority area for financing from the Budget Fund for National Minorities, which was increased by 12 times compared to the previous year and now amounts to 21.8 million dinars.



Meeting of the Coordination of the National Councils of National Minorities

The meeting of the Coordination of the National Councils of National Minorities took place in the Palace of Serbia in Belgrade on February 7. The participants in the meeting also discussed, among other things, project activities that will focus on the effective representation of national minorities in the work of public authorities and public services. Namely, activities were identified for the implementation of the project "Effective Representation of National Minorities in the Work of Public Authorities and Public Services" of the Center for Research of Ethnicity.



Increased Funds for Co-Financing Newspapers in the Languages of National Minorities

On May 6, President of the Provincial Government Igor Mirovic handed over co-financing contracts to representatives of news and publishing companies that issue newspapers and magazines in national minority languages. For this year, the Provincial Government allocated 278 million dinars, or 5 percent more than in 2017.



"Prešern's Day" Marked in Kovin

On February 8, in the hall of the Cultural Center in Kovin, the Central Celebration of the "Prešern's Day", the most important Slovenian cultural holiday, was held. The "Prešern's Day" is a Slovenian cultural and national holiday. It is celebrated on February 8, on the day of the death of the great Slovenian writer and poet, France Prešern.

EDITORIAL 43

Identity at the Center of Attention

National identity or a sense of belonging to a state or a nation is important for every individual. Preserving the language, cultural heritage, and the development of contemporary culture is considered an important, if not the most important segment of the preservation of the identity of a particular nation. Looking at our state, we can say that minorities have a good ground to preserve their identity. We have been able to hear from representatives of the authorities many times that our state will continue to lead a policy that makes it recognizable as a leader in dealing with minorities and respecting their rights. Yes, government representatives claim one version, often showing idealized images of reality, while citizens, or members of minority communities, witness some other realities. Persistent problems with the printing of textbooks, the devastating privatization of local media and the loss of the right to information in their mother tongue are just some of the problems of concern to the national minority members, and our officials have been skilfully evading them.

The problem that has been bothering members of the Bunjevac community for a long time is the Act on the Forced Assimilation of Bunjevacs from 1945. Let us remind ourselves that this Act prohibits the members of the Bunjevac national minority the freedom of national declaration as Bunjevacs. The National Council of the Bunjevac National Minority submitted to the Vojvodina Assembly a request for the annulment of this Act, and the Provincial Government's President Igor Mirović announced the support to the annulment. This request has caused certain tensions between the National Council of the Bunjevac National Minority and the Croatian National Council, both legitimate representatives of their peoples. In an open letter, the president of the Croatian National Council, Slaven Bačić, estimates that the annulment "would unnecessarily burden Serbian-Croatian relations in general", while the Bunjevac National Minority Council responds that "there is no identity dispute on the inter-state level between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Croatia." Why is this issue important to Bunjevacs? As stated by the Bunjevac Association of Bačka, "this Act is still applied indirectly in real life today. It is not implemented by the state of Serbia, neither the Croatia nor the Croats insist on this Act, however, there are few, mostly those of Bunjevac origin, who, with their own will, nowadays declare themselves as Croats, who insist on the consequences of this Act, and, in a perfidious way, build their position even today".

Judging by the reaction of the Bunjevac representatives, the annulment of the Act would satisfy "the injustice that was caused to them in 1945". For them, the decision will undoubtedly be significant if the annulment comes this year, when Vojvodina celebrates 100 years since the accession of parts of today's Vojvodina to Serbia, in which the Bunjevacs, with the Serbs, played a key role.

30 different national minorities live in Serbia



www.minoritynews.rs
f Minority News Portal

Our Focus Is on Preservation of Our Identity

The public often makes difference between small and large communities in our country. However, some experts, and representatives of minorities themselves, point out that there are no small communities; instead, there are those that have fewer members than the others. One of these small-numbered communities is also the Slovenian community, whose members are dispersed all over our country. There are numerous economic and cultural associations that make this minority more visible. This month, on February 8th, the Slovenian National Minority Council celebrated the Slovenian Cultural Day, known as the Prešern's Day. In addition to this holiday, the Slovenian minority in Serbia celebrates the Day of the National Council of the Slovenian National Minority in Serbia (June 6th), the Reformation Day (October 31st) and St. Martin Day (November 11). We talked with Sasa Verbič, the President of the National Council of the Slovenian National Minority, about cultural issues, issues related to the work of the National Council of Slovenians, and the support they receive from their motherland.



Can you tell us more about the Slovenian community in Serbia?

The Slovenian community is one of the small-numbered communities, and according to the last census of 2001, there are 4033 persons who have declared themselves as members of the Slovenian national minority. This is a drastic fall in relation to the period 20 years ago, to the 1991 census, when there were about 8,000 people who declared themselves as Slovenians.

Which are the cities with the highest number of the Slovenian population in Serbia?

Most of the Slovenians live in Belgrade.

They came on business to Serbia, and those who stayed were the ones who had got married here. Slovenians predominantly live in big cities, in urban areas. In addition to Belgrade, our compatriots also live in Novi Sad, which also has a larger Slovenian population. There are also other industrial centers, such as Kostolac and Bor. Basically, we have 15 cultural societies that are located all the way from Subotica in the north to Leskovac in the south, and, as I mentioned, mainly in urban areas. The only part inhabited by some rural population after the WWII, was in Vojvodina in the vicinity of Vršac, where, at that time, around 4000 peasants from underdeveloped areas in Slovenia were settled. However, in the 1950s,

majority of them came back and there are about 1,000 people who remained in this part, which is called Gudurica.

What are the specifics of the Slovenian national minority in relation to other national minorities in the Republic of Serbia?

We are not settled along the border of our home country. We have been a constituent nation since the time of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and afterwards in Yugoslavia, but people mostly came here on business or for education. Some of them returned, some made families here, and the nowadays Slovenians in Serbia are actually their descendants, the sec-

ond, third or fourth generation of those who migrated to Serbia. The structure is such, we have a rather well-educated population.

In your opinion, is cooperation with other national councils important for achieving common goals? Are small-numbered national minorities more easily able to exercise their legally guaranteed rights, if they have a joint appearance in solving the problem?

Absolutely! There are big differences between minorities in Serbia. We have found a common ground with few small-numbered communities such as the Czechs, Germans, Jews, Greeks, and we have signed the Protocol on Mutual Understanding and Cooperation and, under this framework, we are trying to get a better position in our interaction with the state.

What are the issues of general interest around which consensus can be reached with other councils?

As I said - preserving the national identity. As a community, we are very well integrated into the Serbian society, we have no language problems. We try to preserve the sense of national affiliation among the Slovenian descendants and, in this regard, we try to find this common motive for preservation and not assimilation of our communities.

As an example of a good cooperation in the area of culture and art, we can note the event in honor of the architect, Jože Plečnik, which you organized together with the National Council of the Czech National Minority. How did you come to the idea of organizing this event together with the Czechs?

In order not to keep this Protocol of Cooperation, which I just mentioned a while ago, only a dead letter on paper, I used this particular moment. Slovenia marks 145 years since Jože Plečnik's birth. He left a mark here in Serbia, too. He was a cosmopolitan, a man who did a lot not only in Ljubljana, but also in Vienna, in Prague, he was practically Masarik's personal architect in Prague. And then I came up with the idea to propose to the National Council of the Czech National Minority to do it together, to mark this anniversary and present Plečnik to the Serbian audience in a joint project of our two national communities.

How do you mark Slovenian national holidays in Serbia? Do you have any support of the state when organizing cultural and artistic events and marking national holidays?

The national minority councils are funded by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, but our community, namely the societies I mentioned earlier, are supported by the Government of Slovenia. We celebrate the Cultural Day, or Prešern's Day, and this is one of the events that we mark together. Slovenia is one of the few countries where the Culture Day is a national holiday. Here in Serbia, we celebrate this holiday, too, and every year, the host of the celebration is one of our societies. They take turns as hosts, and this year's central celebration was in Kovin. Thus we help every society to develop further. In addition, societies celebrate other holidays, such as the Feast of St Martin, a holiday of a young wine. Then we have Miklavž for children, which is an equivalent of Santa Claus or Saint Nicholas. These are few of the holidays we mark.

Can you give us your impressions on the "Complex Mosaic of Serbia" Festival, where you presented your community to the Belgrade audience a little over a month ago? How did you introduce Slovenians, are you satisfied with the attendance and the organization of the event? Do you think it is important for minorities to participate in public life in this way?

It is important for the public to see that communities of other nationalities live in this country and to see their contribution to the society we live in. All minority communities wanted to highlight something they see as their main characteristic, whether it was a dance, a song, or something else they are recognized by.

On Friday, January 12, 2018, Minister Gorazd Žmavc, in charge of Slovenians abroad, visited the National Council of the Slovenian National Minority and the Society of Slovenians in Belgrade. What would you consider as the most important topics discussed during the visit?

We were interested in the further assistance of the state of Slovenia, and, in this regard, the Minister expressed great support. We presented him with everything we do here and I hope they

will continue to support us in order to help us preserve our national identity, and practically survive as a national community, since we would not be able to succeed without it.

During the visit, one of the issues tackled was the establishment of the Slovenian Language and Culture Center in Serbia?

Yes. Politically and economically, the time has come that this idea can now be implemented. This would practically mean even closer connection between the two cultures, the two nations. We are very close nations, and there is, at least according to my knowledge, a great interest in the Slovenian language, not only among our descendants, but generally among all Serbian citizens.

What are the plans of the National Council in the upcoming period, considering that elections for members of the National Council are held this year?

To be honest, we do not have any special preparations. We continue to do all of the above. I would mention a project that relates to contemporary art. Not only are we focused on folklore and cultural heritage, but we are also trying to come up with something contemporary. Thanks to our strong cadre, three years ago, the National Council launched a project "Slovenika". It is a journal on culture, science and education. When the first issue was published, we promoted it in Serbia first. We struggled to publish the first issue, which was initially released in an electronic version only. And on the basis of the references of this work, we managed to obtain funds to print the number 1 and number 2. We also organized a promotion of the project at the Parobrod Cultural Center, the premises of which were kindly offered to us by the Municipality of Stari Grad, where the seat of our National Council is. On November 28, 2017, we also had a presentation of this journal at the Academy of Sciences in Slovenia, in Ljubljana. The magazine is published once a year and it is thematic. The last issue was dedicated to migrations, and it was received with great interest in Slovenia. We have an international editorial board, it is bilingual. If there is an attachment in the Serbian language, there are abstracts in Slovenian and English, and vice versa. I think we have made a great progress in this regard.

Information in Minority Languages Continues to Be a Priority of the Budget Fund for Minorities

Source:
Government of the Republic of Serbia

Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić chaired a meeting of the National Minorities Council on February 14, in which it was decided that information in the languages of national minorities remains a priority area for funding in 2018 from the Budget Fund for National Minorities, which was increased 12 times and now amounts to 21.8 million dinars.

"The funds have been very small so far and I am proud that, after 15 years, we activated the Fund and then significantly increased it," the Prime Minister said, adding that the Government of the Republic of Serbia will continue to invest efforts and funds for improving the position and rights of national minorities, who are, as she noted, an important resource and pride of Serbia.



Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government Branko Ružić also pointed out that during the drafting of the Law on Amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities public consultations on the draft text of this law were conducted as a completely new practice, in addition to the already existing cooperation with

national councils of national minorities.

The second session of the Council for National Minorities during Prime Minister Brnabić's term in the office was attended by the presidents and representatives of the 21 national minority councils, Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights Suzana Pau-

nović, State Secretaries of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and the Ministry of Culture and Information, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Justice and the Administration for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities.

The role of the Council for National Minorities is to monitor and assess the state of implementation of the rights of national minorities and the state of inter-ethnic relations in the Republic of Serbia.



Brnabić added that she expected many more projects and programs that would affirm the values of national minorities.

The Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities, which will, among other things, improve the transparency of the financing of the national councils, was also presented in the session. The Prime Minister reminded that during this year, elections for national councils of national minorities will be held.



Session of the Parliamentary Committee on Human and Minority Rights Held

Photo: Kancelarija za ljudska i manjinska prava

At the session of the Parliamentary Committee on Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality, held on February 13th, the members of the Committee discussed the Republic of Serbia Report within the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review presented on January 24th to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, said that the UN members recognized that Serbia has an effective system of protection against domestic violence for the first time, and that the state of human rights in Serbia is not ideal, but that progress is visible.

"Serbia received 190 recommendations for the improvement of human rights from the UN Human Rights Council, and that it is immediately accepted 74, while the remaining 116 will be considered at a later stage," Paunović elaborated.

When asked if the concept of presenting the Report is such that it merely amounts to what has been done well or the Report notes unrealized activities as well, Paunović replied that the preparation of all reports, including the Universal Periodic Review Report, is based on the individuals reports prepared and provided by the Ministries on what they did in a given period of time and, as she said, the state report is based on what has been done. She noted that this is a universal practice, and that it is not the practice of Serbia only. "That does not mean that we are not aware of what needs to be done. If the situation was ideal, we would not get recommendations. We want to work on these recommendations, everyone in their area of jurisdiction. The report of the Republic of Serbia is not idealized, it did not create a picture of something that did not happen in Serbia, each item in the Report speaks about the law that was



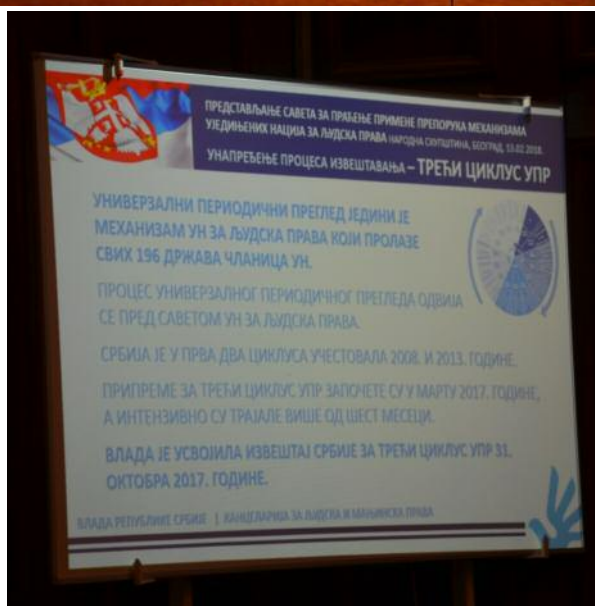
adopted, about which there was a public debate," Paunović said.

In response to the question of whether there were more concrete remarks,

suggestions, or praises when the Report on the Status of National Minorities was presented, Paunović emphasized that the Council was informed on the adoption of a special Action

Plan for the Realization of the Rights of National Minorities under the Action Plan for Chapter 23. "We have over 80 implementers of various measures from the Action Plan, who deliver reports quarterly. We have 5 national councils that have not submitted their reports since the beginning of reporting. This time, the focus was on information and education. The states believe that national minorities should be provided with additionally space and support for education in their own language, and a large set of issues related to the Roma national minority," Suzana Paunović concluded.

In the session chaired by the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee Meho Omerović, the attendees were addressed by the Ombudsman, Zoran Pašalić, the Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission Joseph Mellott, the Permanent Coordinator of the UN Office in Serbia, Karla Hershey, and Sonja Tošković, director of the Belgrade Center for Human Rights.



Increased Funds for Co-Financing Newspapers in the Languages of National Minorities

Source: Provincial Government

President of the Provincial Government, Igor Mirović, presented annual contracts on co-financing to representatives of news and publishing companies that issue newspapers and magazines in the languages of national minorities. For this year, the Provincial Government allocated 278 million dinars, or 5 percent more than in 2017.

"Information in minority languages has been one of the most important priorities of this provincial government since it is of utmost importance for the preservation of the identity of the national minorities," Mirović said on this occasion.

Pointing out that these are nine publish-



ing houses with a total of 22 publications in minority languages, of which one daily, three weekly, five monthly and 13 children and youths publications, he noted that they promote values that belong not only to national minorities, but also to all citizens who live in AP Vojvodina.

"In the years to come, we will do everything to increase this kind of support,

with the aim of bringing it back to the level of 2014," President Mirović announced.

Stressing that the Provincial Government is a true friend and partner of news publishing companies that issue publications in the national minorities' languages, Mirović invited their representatives to communicate with the

Government daily in order to solve together all the problems they may face.

The co-financing contracts were handed over today to the newspapers "Magyar Szó", "Het Nap", "Hlas Ljudu", "Liberataea", "Ruske Slovo", "Hrvatska Rijec", the Bunjevac Information Center, the Macedonian Information Center, and "Ridne Slovor".

Pearl Branch - Promotion of Folklore Heritage of Bačka

Source: RTS

When the town of Futog is mentioned, the first association is cabbage. But this town has the other side. The "Pearl Branch" Festival, which features promotion of rich folklore heritage, workshops dedicated to ethnology and ethnomusicology, folk costumes exhibitions, etc., has been held there for ten years.

Apart from pointing to the importance and preservation of the rich folklore heritage, one of the goals of the "Pearl Branch" Festival is presentation and preservation of national costumes from all over our country.

Milan Stepanov from the Futog Cultural Center "Mladost" emphasizes that the goal of this society is to preserve the national identity through the costume and to continue to cultivate the tradition through the material treasure that has remained from the past.

In addition to the preservation activities, they also work on repairing old folk costumes and making new pieces of costumes, using the old ones as models.

Ana Čusova says she washes, sews and repairs the Slovak skirts from Bački Petrovac. "They are made of cashmere, which is a very expensive material," Čusova notes.

At this festival, over 100 cultural and artistic societies displayed the traditional costumes of their national communities.

The richest traditional Slovak costumes from Bački Petrovac are exhibited, as well as the Hungarian women's costume.

Emil Rupa from Bogujevo says that the Hungarian traditional costume consists of seven petticoats, starched and pressed, a brocade silk apron, tied in a special Bogujevo way. "The cap is called ficul, which means that a married woman is

wearing it," Rupa adds.

The "Pearl Branch" Festival has been supported by numerous institutions both in the country and from abroad.

Aleksandra Dobrin from the Cultural Center "Mladost" notes that the significance of the "Pearl Branch" Festival was recognized by the city of Novi Sad, which is also the patron of the festival, adding that it was also supported by the Provincial Government.

"For a year, we also had the support of the Ministry of Culture. There is also the label of the EFE, the festival mark in Europe, which is given for two years, and the year 2018 is the Year of Preservation of the Tradition in Europe," Dobrinova says.

The "Pearl Branch" Festival will be held in Futog for the eleventh time in mid-October.

Meeting of the Coordination of the National Councils of National Minorities

Photo: National Council of the Roma National Minority

The meeting of the Coordination of the National Councils of National Minorities took place at the Palace of Serbia in Belgrade on February 7.

The Chairman of the Coordination of National Councils of National Minorities and the President of the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority, Hajnal Jenő, convened a session, which discussed, among other things, project activities that will focus on the effective representation of national minorities in the work of public administration and public services. Namely, activities were identified for the implementation of the project "Effective Representation of National Minorities in the Work of Public Administration and Public Services" of the Center for Research of Ethnicity.

"The objective of the project is, after considering the real situation, to refer to the Government of Serbia recommendations and concrete proposals with established deadlines in order to ensure adequate representation of the national minorities in the public administration and public services, in proportion to the participation of minorities in the structure of the population", the Bosniak National Council statement notes.



According to the National Council of the Roma National Minority, the President of the National Council of the Roma National Minority, Tefik Ramadanović, pointed out the problem of the high unemployment of the Roma community, especially when it comes to public administration and public services.

"The Roma National Community is the

largest national minority in Serbia. If we respect the laws of this country that decisively say that the engagement of minority communities' representatives in the public sector is guaranteed to be no less than 2 percent, it is clear that we would not have high unemployment problems. In the public administrations and services we have

a small number of members of minority people, and there are almost no Roma. We have to change that. I demand that we have the same obligations, but also the same rights as all other citizens of the Republic of Serbia. We do not want anything more than that," Ramadanović noted in a written statement posted on the website of the National Council of the Roma National Minority.



Meeting with Members of the Alliance of Associations of National Communities of Subotica

Source: www.subotica.info

On February 1, the President of the City Assembly met with the members of the Alliance of Associations of National Communities of Subotica.

The meeting was attended by Marko Marjanušić, President of the Bunjevac Heritage and President of the Alliance of National Minorities Associations, Igor Race, President of the Society of Slovenians "Triglav", Ivan Hardi, President of the

Ruthenian Society in Subotica, Rudolf Weiss, President of the German People's Alliance, Spasitel Sikaleski, President of the Macedonian Association "Ilinden", Stevan Nikolić, President of the Board of Directors of the Roma Education Center, Teufik Isaković, President of the Vojvodina Bosniak Association, Edvard Ivanović, member of the Presidency of the Association of Montenegrins in Subotica, Nikola Malov on behalf of the Russian National Community, and the Secretary of the City Assembly.

The meeting was constructive and meaningful, with the objective to learn more about the existing problems and limitations in the work of the societies and associations, as well as about the results achieved in the past few years. The meeting provided the basis for future plans for improving the working conditions and protection of national characteristics, as well as the potential for creation of a strategy for successful joint cooperation.

The Vojvodina School of Interculturalism Starts

Source: Beta

Photo: Media Center of Vojvodina

The project "Vojvodina School of Interculturalism", supported by the OSCE Mission to Serbia, will be implemented by the Center for the Development of Civil Society (CRCD) from Zrenjanin at the Temerin High School during March, with the aim of relaxing multi-year tensions between young Serbs and Hungarians in the city, it was announced at a press conference on February 7.

The first "Vojvodina School of Interculturalism" will be organized at the Secondary School "Lukijan Mušicki" in Temerin, and will be attended by carefully selected 15 students of the final grades, who will be proposed by the school.

The CRCD Executive Director, Snežana Ilić, said that her organization conducted a research in Temerin in 2012, which showed that the site was at that time the focal point of inter-ethnic tensions, and that children at school "Lukijan Mušicki" have problems in communication and coexistence.

"Five years ago, during the interethnic incidents research in Temerin, we came to the conclusion that there is no communication among the young Serbs and Hungarians who are attending the same school and that they do not know enough about the culture of each other. We are

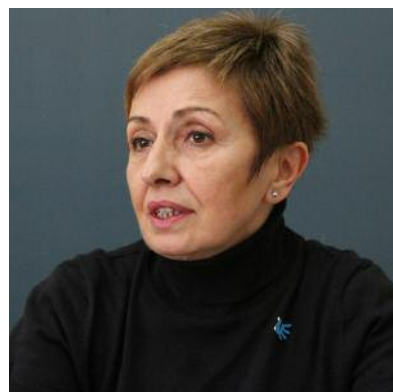
going to the center where it is necessary to bring young people into close contact, which does not exist either at school or community level," Ilić said.

Within the framework of the school program, young people from Temerin will have the opportunity to participate in a four-day interactive workshop, as well as visits to institutions, religious buildings, the Novi Sad Theatre (Ujvideki színház), where there are performances in Hungarian, which are subtitled in Serbian.

Ilić added that a third group of young people will also be included in the project, members of the Ruthenian community from Novi Sad, who will "relax relations between young Hungarians and Serbs".

"The Ruthenian community shares its minority status with Hungarians, and shares the linguistic affinity with the Serbs," Ilić said, adding that she plans to multiply the program and, after this, apply it to other communities and ethno-cultural groups.

The school curriculum development team member, Eva Vukašinović said there were many problems in Temerin regarding communication among young people, primarily because of the language barrier.



"Temerin is the biggest challenge for a start, and I think it would be good to improve the learning of Serbian as a non-native language, as well as learning the language of the environment they live in. According to the information I have, we have come to the point that children in some communities in Vojvodina speak among themselves in English, which was a devastating thing for me," Vukašinović said.

She warned that Serbia had regulations concerning the rights of minorities, and if some of these regulations are guaranteed, it is necessary to talk about the implementation of these regulations.

"Within the school, we will teach young people what guaranteed rights are, what the Constitution and laws are, what constitutes hate speech and why it is banned, and what is freedom of speech and media literacy," Vukašinović, who is an expert in rights of national minorities, added.

The representative of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, Valeria Peri, said that the organization supports this project as part of activities aimed at preventing the radicalization of violent extremism.

"Young people need constructive activities that would deter them from antisocial behaviour and hooligan and extremist groups that promote violence, so this kind of work in non-formal education of young people is the most important mission," Peri said.

The preparation of the curriculum of the "Vojvodina School of Interculturalism" is in progress, and education will start in March 2018.



The Czech Word on the Novi Sad 3 Radio

Photo: Hlas Media

On Thursday, February 1, 2018, the Novi Sad 3 Radio launched a radio program in the Czech language. The program is prepared by the Czech Media Center from Bela Crkva.

The program, which is the first media initiative that aims at presenting the Czech minority in Serbia, reported about the visit of a Czech church of-



ficial to the landowners in the southern Banat area in its news section, while, in the feuilleton section, it presented the story of the Fial family, the most famous Czechs in Šumadija. The program also features Radio Praha 7 contents, intended for diaspora, while, in the section "Czech Language", attention is given to linguistic ambiguities in the use of the Czech language.

Bosniak Community

Enable Bosniaks to Exercise the Rights Guaranteed by the Constitution

Source: BNV

A delegation of the Bosniak National Council, Esad Džudžo, Vice President, Bajro Gegić, MP, and Ahmedin Škrijelj, Advisor to the President, met with the Ombudsman on Monday, February 5th, and discussed the elimination of problems in the process of providing all the missing textbooks in the Bosnian language teaching in Sandžak.

In the process of approving textbooks for classes in the Bosnian language, some representatives of Serbian educational institutions and bodies, without any right, challenge and disable Bosniaks in exercising the constitutionally guaranteed rights.

It was agreed in the meeting that the Ombudsman, on the basis of his authority, would mediate with the Ministry of Education in regard to expeditious approval of the missing textbooks, with full respect of the fundamental identity issues of the Bosniaks, in order to enable the Bosniaks to exercise fully their constitution-



ally guaranteed right to education in their native Bosnian language.

Bearing in mind that the Bosniaks in Sandzak do not have a protector state, the Bosniak National Council considers the Ombudsman's Office as the institution that will protect their interests, remove the obstacles, and enable the effective exercise of the Bosniaks' rights.

In the Whirlpool of Dance for 60 Years

Source: RTV

On February 3, the annual concert of the children's groups of the Slovak Cultural and Artistic Society "Janko Čmelik" was held in Stara Pazova, marked by two great jubilees of choreographer Ružena Červenski, whose recognizable trademark is the traditional folk art of Pazova Slovaks.



In her 80th year, a retired teacher and choreographer celebrates 60 years of choreography, and, as she says, she has danced from a young age. She does not know how many concerts she has had so far, and this jubilee concert has been prepared as usually, because her driving force is folklore.

She is the holder of numerous awards and prizes, including the Golden Badge of the Cultural Education Community of Serbia. She carefully cherishes all of them, but she keeps creating new choreographies, not thinking about the time or how much longer she will be able to work.

Not only did she teach many generations how to dance and sing, but she also taught them life, helped them do their homework, and most certainly, passed on her love for folklore.

At the concert entitled "In the Whirlwind of the Dance" four children's groups performed, and the program began and ended with a joint song.

Ljibuška Lakatoš, the President of the Čmelik Society, presented a special gift to the celebrator, as well as Dragoslav Bonđi, the President of the Executive Committee of the Stara Pazova local self government, and the dancers also surprised her with gifts and a birthday song, which was eventually joined by everyone in the audience.



Bulgarian Community

"Shopi Night" Held in Pančevo

Source: www.far.rs

Under the motto "There are many of us, but we do not know each other", the traditional local party "Shopi Night" is celebrated in Pančevo on February 10 for the seventh consecutive year. As it was the case in the previous years, the gathering was organized on the eve of St. Tryphon - Zarezoja, and the organizer of the event was the Association of Citizens of the Bulgarian National Minority "Shopi Oro" from Pančevo.



This year's Crystal Hall "Banatski Kutak" gathered around 170 guests, who enjoyed in the program and traditional culinary specialties. Musicians Nenad Dimitrov, Aleksandar Vasov, Predrag Manov and

Goran Jovanovic also took care of the atmosphere, as well as the members of KUD "Stanko Paunović" from Pančevo, who presented a mix of Shopi dances to the audience.

Among the numerous officials who attended the event were the Consul of the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Belgrade, Georgi Hristov, the Education and Information Councilman of the Dimitrovgrad Municipality, Dejan Milev, Dalibor Milanov, representative of KIC "Caribrod", Iri-na Bogdanović from the Association of Russians and Their Descendants "Romaška" from Pančevo, organizer of the "Bugarijada" event Zarko Jef-timov, representatives of NIS Gazprom from Pančevo, as well as the President of the Association "Shopi Oro", Zoran Rajkov.

Danijela Gvozdenović was elected to succeed this year's host, Vukašin Veselinov, and organize the gathering next year.

"Ruthenradio" Coming Soon

Source: Ruske Slovo



On February 7, 2018, in the Assembly of the Citizens' Association "Ruthenradio" was held at the Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Ruthenians. The Assembly provided full support to the initiative for the establishment of "Ruthenradio", which would unify all programs in Ruthenian language that were created in Vojvodina. It is planned that the program will be broadcast both on the Internet and via conventional terrestrial route.

The Assembly President Slavko Rac reminded that the idea of establishing this radio station was created in 2012, when the Citizens Association "Ruthenradio" was founded. As he noted, the radio will broadcast the project-based the program.

It was concluded in the meeting that,



in the coming period, concrete steps should be taken to establish the radio, i.e. it is necessary to register it as a medium outlet in the Business Registry Agency, as well as with all other republic authorities, in order to obtain a broadcasting license.

The Association "Ruthenradio" consists of representatives of the National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority, the Ruthenian Journalist Association, the Radio Maria, and the Agribusiness Incubator.

Jewish Community

Ružić and Medić Discuss the Position of the Jewish Community

Source: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government



Minister Branko Ružić met with the President of the Jewish Municipality of Belgrade (JOB), Danilo Medić, on February 7 to discuss cooperation in improving the position and revita-

lization of the Jewish community.

According to Medić, the goals of JOB are further affirmation of the values of the Jewish community, social and health care, and support

for increasing the birth rate.

Minister Ružić pointed out that the improvement of the position of national minorities is one of the priorities of this Ministry and that he is very proud of the fact that this year the Budget Fund for National Minorities has increased 12 times and currently amounts to more than 21 million dinars. To this end, Ružić invited the representatives of the Jewish community to submit a project proposal that would contribute to the affirmation of multiculturalism.

The interlocutors discussed the preservation of the cultural and historical heritage of the Jewish community and in this context emphasized the establishment of the Memorial Complex at the Old Fair Grounds, which should be an institution of educational, museum and research character.



The Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church Meets with the Representatives of the Vlach National Minority Council

Source: National Minority Council of Vlachs



On February 6, 2018, at the invitation of His Holiness, the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Mr. Irinej, the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church met in the Belgrade Patriarchate with the representatives of the National Minority Council (NMC) of Vlachs, Radiša Dragojević, President, Dragan Andrejević, in charge of religious questions in the NMC, Dr Siniša Čelojević, member of the NMC Executive Board and President of the Association "Gergina", and Miletić Mihajlović, Vice President of the NMC.



The topic of the meeting was the introduction of the Vlach language into the worship of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as the uncanonical activity of the Romanian Church on the territory of Eastern Serbia.

The representatives of the National Council of Vlachs informed the Holy Synod on the need for introducing worship in the mother

tongue, emphasizing the fact that the native language of the Vlachs is the Vlach language, that the state of Serbia is the only motherland and the homeland of the Vlachs of Serbia, and that members of the Vlach community considered the Serbian Orthodox Church only as their church. Before the Holy Synod, for the first time in 800 years of the existence of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Lord's

Prayer was spoken in the Vlach language.

The Holy Synod supported the initiative of the representatives of the Vlach National Minority Council, and noted that they will inform the Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is to make the final decision on the proposals, on the views of the Vlach community and support them.

The Regular Annual Assembly of the "Gergina" Association

Source: National Minority Council of Vlachs



The Association for the Preservation of Culture and Tradition of Vlachs "Gergina" held a regular annual assembly on February 3. The Assembly appointed new members of the Management and Supervisory Board, while Sinisa Čelojević will continue to be the head of the Association in the next four years.

The Assembly also talked about the preparations for the 10th Festival of Vlach Music "Gergina" in 2018. The festival will last for two days, and traditionally will be held the first and second night after the Easter, April 9 and 10. During the first competitive night, 20 young vocal soloists and instrumentalists will be presented, and the interest is great for the second, review night, with the already affirmed performers of the Vlach music. The festival will have an international character.

Given that it is the jubilee tenth festival, 10

billboards will be posted in the center of Negotin, with all the previous seasons of the festival presented through photographs, and, in preparation for the festival, a meeting with media representatives will be organized in order to promote the Negotin festival of Vlach music as efficiently as possible. TV Istok from Salaš remains the general media sponsor.

The Assembly also discussed preparations for the upcoming elections for the Vlach National Minority Council, which are to be held in October, following the ratification of the two national minority laws. The "Gergina" Association, which is the carrier of the most numerous and most important activities of the NMC, will do everything possible in order to prepare well the forthcoming elections for the NMC. The Assembly launched and strongly supported the initiative to transfer the NMC headquarters to Negotin, in order to make the work of the NMC even more efficient.

"We have published 25 books in the Vlach language so far, thanks to the previous standardization of the Vlach language. We have a large number of students who are interested in learning the Vlach language as the facultative subject. There were 524 of them, but today their number is far smaller," Andrejević said.

"Vlachs act under the umbrella National Council of Vlach and "Gergina" is the most active part of the NMC. In 2012 the Vlachs got their script, whether it was good or not will be judged by the public, but the most important thing is that the script meets all the standards according to which each voice has its own letter. We succeeded in this. The only downside is that a large number of members of the Vlach national minority in Serbia and the NMC have not been informed about it, so we have to work on affirmation of everything that we have achieved," Živojin Dragišić, a member of the Managing Board, concluded.

"Prešern's Day" Marked in Kovin

Source: RTV

Photo: RTV / www.pancevo.mojkraj.rs

On February 8, in the hall of the Cultural Center in Kovin, the Central Celebration of "Prešern's Day", the most important Slovenian cultural holiday, was held.

The Prešern's Day is a Slovenian cultural and national holiday. It is celebrated on February 8, on the day of the death of the great Slovenian writer and poet, France Prešern.

The Prešern's Day was marked in Kovin by an academy attended by students from elementary schools "Đura Jakšić" from Kovin and "Olga Petrov" from Banatski Brestovac, as well as members of the Association of Slovenians of South Banat "Logarska dolina" from Pančevo, who have organized this event since 2010.



Logarska dolina "Association is also crowned by the signing of the agreement of brotherly relations between two schools, Elementary School "Djura Jakšić" from Kovin and Ornož Primary School from Ornož. We are very

happy with this cooperation, as well as with the cooperation with the Association itself, which we will continue in the future," Sanja Petrović, the President of Kovin Municipality, said.

"It is the cooperation between the national groups that speaks about human dignity, but also about a possibility to intensify dialogue. This is my main message, and this time in which we live is the time of the dialogue, interaction, and mutual enrichment,

"Belgrade Archbishop Stanislav Hočevar said.

In addition to cultural ties, Serbia and Slovenia are also associated with ever-increasing economic cooperation.

"You are the second destination for our investments, a billion and two hundred million have been invested here. We employ about 25,000 local people and there are about 600 Slovenian companies in Serbia, so this is great. In the last two years, the number of Serbian investments in Slovenia has increased, too," HE Vladimir Gasparič, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to Serbia, said.

The first celebration of this holiday was held in 1941, and continued after the end of the WWII. In addition to Slovenia, the Prešern's Day is marked in all countries where Slovenians live and where their associations exist.



The celebration of this important day was completed by numerous guests and members of the 17 associations of Slovenians in Serbia.

"This year, our association has been tasked with organization of the central celebration of the Prešern's Day in Serbia, and this is very important to us, because we have thus received a recognition that we are hard-working and worthy," Josip Veber, the President of the Association of Slovenians of South Banat "Logarska dolina", said.

"The five-year cooperation that Kovin municipality has had with the"



History and Tradition in the Modern World

Source:
Bunjevac Media Center

One of the four national holidays of the Bunjevac community - the Day of the Great Gathering, was customarily marked on the Marin Day, on February 2nd, at the Subotica restaurant "Spartacus". It was an opportunity to assemble a large number of people to talk, spend time, but also to remind themselves about the history of the Bunjevac community, in which the Great Gathering has a great significance.

- Significance is, among other things, also historical. On this day in 1879, the Bunjevacs assembled for the first time in the Great Gathering, to present themselves to their community, and to the town, where, even today, the largest number of them still live. It was an opportunity to show ourselves as an organized community. This is why the National Council of the Bunjevac National Minority declared this day as our national holiday, we combined history and tradition in a contemporary era. We celebrate the



those who attended the Great Gathering were friends, brothers, neighbours, god-fathers ...

- My dear Bunjevacs, we are all connected here in one way or another, because we are all brothers, closest friends, neigh-

bours ... We have shared this space for centuries, we live together, our costumes and dances are similar, we celebrate with same songs and same circle dances. It has been 100 years since the creation of the Kingdom of Serbia, and then the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians, which we created together, the Serbs and the Bunjevacs, and all other peoples together with us. We are proud of what our ancestors left us, and it is up to us to preserve the tradi-

tion, to continue their path, so that the new generations will be proud of us - the first man of Subotica noted.

Vlado Radulović of the Office for Human and Minority Rights confirmed the significance of the Great Gathering, not only for the Bunjevac community, but also for Serbia as a whole.

- The message of this Gathering is certainly in preserving the special features of the Bunjevac national minority. We also saw a rich cultural and artistic program tonight and we really enjoyed this evening. We also took the opportunity to talk with the representatives of the Council and to point out the importance of this umbrella institution, both for the Bunjevacs and other national minorities. As far as the Bunjevac community is concerned, great progress has been made. First of all, I would like to emphasize the field of education, where every year there are more and more children who attend classes in the Bunjevac speech. We hope that the Bunjevac speech will soon be upgraded to the Bunjevac language, because we all want this to be the final year in the standardization of the Bunjevac language - Radulović said.



Great Gathering in the same way as our ancestors did, and we are fighting the same as they did to preserve our tradition. Yes, we have achieved a lot, but we need to be self-critical and admit that there is still a lot to be achieved. As long as we exist, and as long as we maintain our identity and who we are, there is hope and future for us - Dr. Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić, the President of the National Council of the Bunjevac National Minority said.

The participants were also greeted by Bogdan Laban, the Mayor of Subotica. He extended congratulations for the Bunjevci's national holiday, noting that all



The cultural and artistic part of the program began with a drama sketch "We Will Have a Bunjevac Gathering", performed by Stela Bukvić and Dušan Ivić, members of the Drama section of the KUD "Bunjevka", according to the text Kate Kuntić. The first song of the Gathering, "The Circle Dance, Tamburiza Plays", performed by Tamara Babić and tamburiza orchestra "Secret" followed, and the audience impatiently awaited the parade of the most beautiful girls of the Gathering, and the announcement who the Miss of the Gathering will be.



Centar za istraživanja migracija
Center for Migration Studies



eu2018bg.bg

Bulgarian Presidency of the Council
of the European Union



The issuance of the newsletter is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.
Opinions expressed in the newsletter do not necessarily represent the official positions of the donor.