

**Publication "Challenges of
Minority Policy in Bilateral
and Regional Cooperation"
Presented**

**Contracts for Promotion
of Multilingualism
in AP Vojvodina
Awarded**

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may 2018



Shukri Ymeri: We Expect Results and Greater Successes

**The Protector of
Citizens and the
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**A Memorandum of
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the Bosniak National Council
and the National Council of the
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HIGHLIGHTS



A Public Call for Allocation of Funds from the Budget Fund for National Minorities Announced

On May 7, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government issued a public call for the allocation of funds from the Budget Fund for financing programs and projects in the area of information in the languages of national minorities in 2018. This year, RSD 21.8 million was secured, which is 12 times more than in the previous year.



Presentation of the Publication "Challenges of Minority Policy in Bilateral and Regional Cooperation"

The Forum for Ethnic Relations, with the support of the Open Society Foundation Serbia, presented a publication titled "Challenges of Minority Policy in Bilateral and Regional Cooperation". The aim of the publication is to point out the basic elements and basic processes that have an impact on the implementation of the proactive integrative minority policy of the Republic of Serbia, as well as to point out the possibilities of improving the protection of the rights and the integration of national minorities, and consequently relations with neighbors in bilateral and regional cooperation, as well as in the process of integration into the European Union.



Certificates awarded to students from the AID Academy

The Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria, in presence of H.E. Ambassador Radko Vlajkov, hosted the award ceremony of certificates to the participants of the Interethnic, Interconfessional and Intercultural Dialogue Academy, organized by the Forum for Ethnic Relations, in cooperation with the Higher School for Business Economics and Entrepreneurship (PEP) and the ERMA program, Sarajevo-Fori, with the support of the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria.



Ružić Meets with Representatives of the Aromanians

Minister of State Administration and Local Self-Government Branko Ružić met with the representatives of the Serbian-Aromanian Society "Lunjina" on April 20 about the position of this minority community and the exercise of their right to preserve identity, culture and language. Minister Ružić said that, although at this moment there are no conditions for the Aromanian community to form its national council of a national minority, other mechanisms for exercising their rights are available.

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Far Below the Expected?

More than two years ago, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Action Plan for the Realization of the Rights of National Minorities, as well as the Action Plan for Chapter 23, thus making the Republic of Serbia complete its strategic commitment to improving the institutional and legislative framework in the area of human and minority rights and freedoms. After two years, in addition to numerous activities included in the action plans, a public debate on the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities came to the fore. During the public hearing, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government organized two roundtables, in Kučevo and Belgrade, and after the completion of the discussion, compiled a Report on the conducted public debate.

Some of the objections of national minority councils were that, in the Draft, the national minority councils were not characterized as organizations of cultural autonomy and the form of non-territorial self-government, that the powers of national councils in certain areas have been reduced by introducing excessive control over their work, thus weakening the institutional position of national councils.

As we have written before, perhaps the most problematic provision of the Draft Law concerns the depoliticisation of national minority councils, or conflict of interest in their membership. Some NMC representatives agreed that this provision is acceptable only for non-minority political parties. As it has been pointed out several times, this provision is opposed to the democratic electoral process, since national councils are elected in elections, and every election process is political where the main actors of a political party are. Namely, according to the Report, the National Councils proposed that Article 11 of the Draft Law, which provides that a member of the National Council can not be a member of the governing bodies of a political party, explicitly provides that this does not apply to the bodies of political parties of national minorities, or to be deleted altogether; or that the envisaged solution applies only to the president of the national council and members of the executive board, and that a member of the national council can not be a deputy, councilor, or a member of a political party other than a political party of a national minority. Proposals related to this article were partially accepted, that is, the Ministry "accepted the remark that the proposal of that article was too wide-ranging, and, in that respect, it accepted the suggestion that membership of the governing bodies of political parties should be incompatible with the tasks of the president of the national council and member of the national council's executive board."

30 different national minorities live in Serbia



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We Expect Results and Greater Successes

The Albanian community living in this region is an ancient nation. However, the National Council of the Albanian National Minority was established in 2010, at a time when many national councils had already developed their field of activity. We discussed the level the establishment of the National Council has contributed to the development of the Albanian minority, as well as other topics, with the President of the National Council of Albanians, Shukri Ymeri.



Could you tell us when the Albanians inhabited these areas and what is specific for your community?

The Albanians are descendants of the Illyrians, and there are many scientific arguments that the Dardans inhabited these territories since the 4th century B.C. There is one place in Orahovica, "Kacipup", where there are still graves of the Dardan warriors. Then, in some manuscripts by Serbian

authors, the church in Orahovica is mentioned sometime around the 11th century, and, after that, we have the "Preševo Castle", "the Buhtan Bridge", and many other archeological sites that indicate that we as a people, as an Albanian community living on these territories, are one of the ancient nations of this region. The specifics of the Albanian people are their tradition and their language. I think that there is no similarity with any

other nation in the region in this regard, and we are the oldest nation in this area. We call ourselves a nation, because we are, from a scientific perspective, a nation that is characterized by the number of people, the area inhabited by all Albanians, our engagement and other ceremonies, our descendants, our language, our tradition, our faith. These are all elements of one nation, although we are separated from the Albanian tree

and we remain as a minority in the Preševo region in Serbia, as a consequence of global politics and misunderstandings between the people living in this region.

The Albanian national minority participated in the elections for national minority councils for the first time in 2010. What kind of impact has the establishment of the Council had on the position of the Albanian minority since? Has the development proceeded as expected?

It is known that the Albanian minority had great temptations in the past, especially during the Milošević regime, so the Albanians did not form the National Council in time. It is true that, in 2010, we established the National Council of the Albanian National Minority for the first time. It was not easy for us to make a decision on the establishment of this Council, and we did not expect much to be done. However, there are several specific steps that we can say that have been achieved. For example, if we talk about education, a number of textbooks in the Albanian language are available, but not all. The establishment of the National Council has positively influenced the policy mobilization of the Albanians, and we, as the National Council, are able to present our problems to the national, Albanian, and international stakeholders, and, normally, to the various ministries and the Government in Belgrade.

Due to the circumstances that occurred at the beginning of this year, you are currently serving as the President of the National Council of the Albanian National Minority. What are your expectations about the forthcoming elections for national councils, and in which areas, for which the Council has competencies, you expect the greatest progress?

Earlier this year I became president of the National Council of the Albanian National Minority after the death of the previous president, late Mr. Musliu. Our expectations regarding the new elections for the National

Council of the Albanian National Minority are primarily the hope that, after the next elections, we will have 29 members in the National Council of the Albanian National Minority. We now have 15 and we hope that the number of councilors will increase, to the number that we had in 2010, when there were 29. Also, by the decision of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, the National Council of the Albanian National Mi-

Our expectations regarding the new elections for the National Council of the Albanian National Minority are primarily the hope that, in the next elections for the National Council of the Albanian National Minority, we will have 29 members. We now have 15, and we hope that the number of councilors will increase, to the number from 2010, when there were 29.

nority has, for years, suffered consequences of the decision to boycott the population census in 2011. What do we expect from the next elections? We expect results and greater successes. Bearing in mind that the National Council of the Albanian National Minority legally has the right to work within the four competencies - in the fields of education, culture, information and official use of the Albanian language and script - we expect greater progress in the field of education and information, and particularly in the field of education. With support of the Ministry of Education and the international stakeholders, we expect to solve the problems of textbooks

in the Albanian language in the near future, starting from elementary education to the high school education. To this end, we will cooperate closely with all ministries, especially the Ministry of Education.

As you are also the Principal of the "Zejnel Ajdini" Primary School, you are familiar with the work of other schools in which the classes are conducted in the Albanian language. What are the biggest challenges that these schools face?

The problems of Albanian schools are the same, both in my school and in all other schools, from Preševo to Medvedja. First of all, the main problems are lack of textbooks for students and inadequately furnished classrooms when it comes to modern practical teaching equipment. Also, the older teaching staff is not able to keep up with technological changes that occur over time. And, of course, I would mention that cooperation is a challenge, insufficient mutual cooperation between pupils, parents and teachers, and it is common to face these problems both in my school and other schools. But the biggest problem, as I noted earlier, is the lack of school textbooks in the Albanian language. As we are entering the second decade of the 21st century, it is incomprehensible that Albanian students do not have educational textbooks in their mother tongue.

How does the Memorandum of Education in Minority Languages, which has been signed between your National Council, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and the Textbook Institute work in practice?

This Memorandum is not functional for us because it envisages only a partial solution for textbooks in the Albanian language. It is based predominantly on translations of primary school textbooks, while we are interested in solving the problem of textbooks for both primary and secondary education.

Have you managed to provide aut-

hors and translators for textbooks in the Albanian language, is there any will to overcome the problems in order to complete the textbooks for students attending classes in the Albanian language?

We think that the problem is not in providing authors, translators, or editors of school textbooks. The problem is deeper, and that is why we did not search for editors and writers of these textbooks. Instead, we have asked for an annex to the Memorandum with the Ministry of Education and the Textbook Institute, with the aim to ensure a more comprehensive solution for textbooks in the Albanian language, both for elementary and secondary education.

At the round table "Implementation of the Minority Action Plan: Education in Minority Languages, school year 2017/2018", which was held in Belgrade at the end of last year, you noted that one of the problems is the recognition of diplomas for students studying in Kosovo, as well as insufficient knowledge of the Serbian language by members of the Albanian minority in Bujanovac, Preševo and Medveđa.

This is true, since most of our students who complete secondary education study in Kosovo, and, after completing their studies, they face problems with the diploma recognition with the Ministry of Education. The consequence of this problem is that our graduates are forced to migrate somewhere, to stay in Kosovo or migrate to European countries. This represents our great concern and, at the same time, it is detrimental to the educational process, because our teaching staff are old and will retire soon and we have no opportunity to replace them. Also, the truth is that the Albanian minority does not speak the Serbian language well. The reason is not that they do not want to learn or speak it, but the problem is that we mostly have internal contacts, among Albanians only, and very limited contact with the Serbs, and that is why we do not speak the Serbian language. Teachers

who teach the Serbian language in Albanian schools are well prepared and teach pupils with full capacity, but, as soon as the children return to their homes, they are not in contact with the Serbian language, so they always fall behind in this regard.

We are interested in making sure that our children speak the Serbian language, not only the Serbian language,

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but also as many languages as possible. The fact is that we have teachers who are well prepared for this class, i.e. the majority of Serbian language teachers are licensed, but the problem is that our children do not have contacts with Serbian students or programs in the Serbian language; they are predominantly informed in the Albanian language, and they rarely have the opportunity to speak the Serbian language. And this is of greatest importance. About 50,000 inhabitants live in the territory of Pre-

ševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa, and in the Ministry of Education we have only one representative - pedagogical advisor. It would be in our interest that the Ministry of Education opens an office in Preševo and hire more pedagogical counselors that our Albanian schools would be in touch with. This would help us a lot.

A Cooperation Agreement was recently signed between the Faculty of Economics in Subotica and the Faculty of Economics in Tetovo. Can you tell us more about this agreement and its relevance to Bujanovac?

Yes, this agreement, which was signed in Bujanovac between the Faculty of Economics in Subotica and the Faculty of Economics in Tetovo, should be welcomed. I personally attended the signing ceremony. Having a university department in Bujanovac is a great pleasure and a great pride. It means that this is a university city. With this agreement, signed for a five-year term, the Faculty of Economics in Tetovo assists Albanian students with the Albanian language classes, but the Faculty of Economics in Subotica, based in Bujanovac, also provides Albanian students with about 30% of classes in the Albanian language, and these classes are usually translated simultaneously. And we hope that the Faculty of Economics in Subotica in Bujanovac will increase this percentage, to have more than 30% of classes in Albanian, as this will be most helpful. Also, if I am not mistaken, this agreement provides that classes are translated into the Albanian language only for undergraduate studies, while translation into the Albanian language is not provided for the graduate studies classes. We, therefore, hope that the Albanian translation will be provided for graduate students, too, so that Albanian students, when they finish their studies at this Faculty, are really prepared. They have good conditions at this Faculty, they have a good teaching staff, and we want graduate students today, tomorrow, and in the future to be competent to help our society that needs them badly.

A Public Call for the Allocation of Funds from the Budget Fund for National Minorities Announced

Izvor: Ministarstvo državne uprave i lokalne samouprave

On May 7, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Government issued a public call for the allocation of funds from the Budget Fund for financing programs and projects in the area of information in the languages of national minorities in 2018.

Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Branko Ružić, said on this occasion that this Fund was activated last year after 15 years of existence, noting that, in 2018, 21.8 million dinars were provided for this purpose, which is 12 times more than in the previous year.

"The Ministry is doing a lot to improve the



position of national minorities. We have prepared amendments to the regulations that improve the framework for the realization of the rights of our national minorities, and this Fund aims to contribute to

the promotion of information in the languages of national minorities of the media and programs in the languages of national minorities. "

The Call for Proposals is open until June 5, 2018, and the right of participation is provided to institutions, associations, foundations, companies and other organizations founded by national councils of national minorities, civil society organizations with headquarters in the territory of the Republic of Serbia and whose scope of activities is protection and promotion of the rights and the position of members of national minorities, as well as endowments, foundations and conferences of universities, or academies of vocational studies.

Public Debate on the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities Completed

Source: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government

The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government conducted a public debate on the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities from March 29 to April 18, 2018.

During the public debate, the text of the Draft Law was published on the website of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, the Portal of e-Government and the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, and all interested parties were prompted to submit their remarks, suggestions, and proposals to the Ministry via its electronic and postal address.

During the public hearing, two roundtables were held, in Kučevo on April 11

and in Belgrade on April 16, 2018, attended by representatives of state bodies, independent bodies, national councils of national minorities, international organizations and civil society organizations.

State bodies, bodies of AP Vojvodina, national councils of national minorities, political parties and movements, citizens' associations and individuals participated in the public debate. Sixteen e-mail messages with remarks, suggestions, and proposals on the Draft Law were submitted to the e-mail address of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.

The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government has considered all comments, suggestions and

proposals submitted by the participants in the public debate.

A number of specific remarks, suggestions and proposals were not able to be accepted by the Ministry because they are not in the spirit of the concept on which the law is based or because they significantly differ from systemic, especially Constitutional solutions, as well recommendations by the Constitutional Court and relevant international bodies.

Upon completion of the public hearing, the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government made a Report on the Conducted Public Debate on the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities, which is available on the Ministry's website.

The Government Continues the Policy of Respecting the Rights of National Minorities

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, Ana Brnabić, stated that the Council for National Minorities is of great importance for our country and that the Government's policy is based on tolerance, respect for the rights of national minorities and their integration into the wider social community.

Brnabić, who held the Council's session for the third time on May 10, stressed that the level of discrimination against minority groups and members of national communities is in decline, but, in order to become a fully inclusive society, we have much more to do.

She briefed representatives of national councils of national minorities on the significance of the Address Register Project, jointly implemented by the Republic Geodetic Authority, the Post of Serbia, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities and Local Self-Governments. The updating of the Address Register is another important step towards the introduction of the state order and the modernization of the state administration, the

Prime Minister pointed out, explaining that, in this way, the citizens and the economy will be given efficient and easily accessible services provided by the state.

The Prime Minister also reminded that the public debate on the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities was conducted in the period from March 29 to April 18. State

Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Branko Ružić, reminded that, at the last session of the Council, it was decided that information in the languages of national minorities should remain a priority area for financing in 2018. The funds from the Budget Fund for National Minorities were earmarked for this purpose in the amount of 21.8 million dinars, which is 12 times more than in the previous year.

To this end, Ružić said that, on May 7, a call was issued for the allocation of funds from the Budget Fund for National Minorities for programs and projects in the field of information in the languages of national minorities for 2018.



bodies, AP Vojvodina authorities, national councils of national minorities, political parties and movements, associations, citizens and individuals participated in the public debate.

Brnabić stressed that the plan is to hold elections for national councils of national minorities by the end of this year.

Acting Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, presented the Sixth Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Realization of the Rights of National Minorities, pointing out that the Seventh Report is being prepared, and that the presentation of the Seventh Report is scheduled for early June.

Controversial Literary Contest in Surdulica Cancelled

As a result to the strong reaction of the public in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian national minority in Serbia, caused by a competition for students for the best literary or artistic work "Fatherland and Freedom - Past, Present and Future", which was announced by the Organizing Committee for Marking the First Slava of the Saint Surdulica Martyrs, Technical School "Nikola Tesla" in Surdulica, and Church Surdulica municipality, the contest was cancelled on May 8th.

Namely, the organizer stated in the invitation that the competition was organized on the occasion of marking the first slava of the newly-consecrated Holy Martyrs of Surdulica

and the day of transferring their sacred relics to the Memorial Cemetery in Surdulica. As further stated, the Holy Martyrs of Surdulica "were killed by a Bulgarian crime in the First World War in the area of southeastern Serbia, Vardar Serbia and Kosovo in Surdulica - a central mass killing field from 1915 to 1918". The call for participation in the contest was submitted to all schools in Serbia, including regions with Bulgarian population, as well as schools in the Republic of Srpska.

According to the journalist Ivan Nikolov, in addition to the problems of pedagogical nature, the missing historical facts, as well as the problem of moral nature, are notable.

"A Christian Orthodox Church, instead of preaching love and understanding among believers, descends to the level of political propaganda using, in short, the controversial military propaganda misinformation from the time of the First World War, resorting, at the same time, to the problematic geographical names such as Vardar Serbia", Nikolov points out.

According to the Radio Television Caribrod, the cancellation of the contest was made possible as a result of the engagement and coordination of the Deputy Prime Minister for Justice and Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Ekaterina Zaharieva, and the Bulgarian Ambassador to Serbia, Radko Vlahjov.

The Ombudsman and the Bulgarian Ambassador Sign the Grant Agreement

Source: Ombudsman

On May 3, the Ombudsman, Zoran Pašalić, signed an agreement with the Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria to Belgrade, Radko Vlajkov, in Dimitrovgrad, on a grant for the implementation of the project "Increasing the Ombudsman's Availability to Citizens Living in the Interior of Serbia". The signing of the agreement was also attended by the Bulgarian Ombudsman, Maja Manolova.



bilities in this area, Pašalić pointed out.

Extending appreciation to the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria for support, Pašalić said that the implementation of the project is aimed at strengthening the culture of human rights, social justice and commitment to European principles as key democratic values. Furthermore, it is critically important to inform the public about the concept of human rights, as well as the Ombudsman's responsi-

The Ombudsman Institution must be accessible to all citizens of Serbia, including those in smaller communities, Pašalić said, adding that during visits to cities and municipalities, in addition to receiving complaints from citizens on the work of public authorities, they will also talk with representatives of municipal and city authorities about exercising right of their citizens at the local level.

The Ombudsman has so far received 78 complaints from citizens from Dimitrovgrad, who mostly complain about violation of rights in the field of property protection and compliance with the law. In the area of the rights of national minorities, citizens point to the problems they encounter in the process of recognition of foreign diplomas and education.

The Ombudsman Zoran Pašalić and the Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria Maja Manolova discussed improvement of cooperation between the two institutions in the field of protection of human and minority rights.

In conversation with representatives of civil society, which followed the signing of the agreement, the problems that citizens face daily were presented.

Certificates Awarded to Students of the AID Academy

The Forum for Ethnic Relations, in cooperation with the Higher School for Business Economics and Entrepreneurship (PEP), and the ERMA program, Sarajevo-Forli, with the support of the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Belgrade, conducted training for young experts - researchers in the field of interethnic, intercultural and interconfessional dialogue. The participants of the Academy for Interethnic, Interconfessional and Intercultural Dialogue - AID, who successfully completed the winter cluster, received certificates Tuesday, May 8, at the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Belgrade. He was also present at the ceremony. Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria Radko Vlajkov.

The Ambassador emphasized that the Embassy of Bulgaria highly appreciates the activity of the Forum for Ethnic Re-



lations, whose projects have been financially supported for several years. As he said, Serbia is a country of numerous minorities, in which there are still some prejudices, and young people are the ones who should contribute to these prejudices disappearing.

Certificates were awarded to 9 parti-

cipants, who, according to Verka Jovanovic, program assistant on the project and, at the same time, one of the participants in the Academy, came from different regions of Serbia, which, according to her words, only contributed to the understanding of the idea of multiculturalism and multiethnicity.

Contracts for Promotion of Multilingualism in AP Vojvodina Awarded

Source: Provincial Government

On April 16, the President of the Provincial Government, Igor Mirović, and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Provincial Government and the Provincial Secretary for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities - National Communities, Mihalj Njilaš, awarded contracts on the allocation of budget funds to bodies and organizations from the territory of AP Vojvodina, in which the languages and scripts of national minorities are in official use.

For this purpose, funds were provided in the total amount of 9,5 million dinars,



which were, following a public competition, distributed to 83 bodies and organizations, in order to train employees to use the language of national minorities, to develop the system of electronic administration in conditions of multilingualism, for multilingual signs with names of settlements, streets, authorities, and public notices, as well as for printing multilingual forms and publications.

Referring to the importance of exercising the rights of members of national minorities to the official use of their language and script, President Mirović emphasized that this is only a part of the public policy towards national minorities, which is implemented in different segments and represents one of the most important priorities of the Provincial Government.

He pointed to some common goals, calling them civilizational values that



we must apply at all times in Vojvodina, which remind us of the famous names of members of national minorities who created in their language and script and pronounced the glory of our country.

"The essence is important – and the essence is in unity, in the life we share, in emphasizing the values that belong to everyone, because the values of national communities are our common values and the values of the majority are the values of each national community,"

Mirović said, adding that we must show it through different gestures, from the presence in marking significant dates and personalities of members of na-

tional minorities, through increasing the financial and technical capacity to apply official and any other use of minority languages and scripts in the territory of Vojvodina.

The President of the Provincial Government announced that, as of July 2018, there will be enough translators in the system of provincial administration to meet the needs of deputies and services, and that, for the first time, the translation of general acts into the languages of national minorities will be carried out.

Vice President Njilaš said that the contest has been held for more than 10 years in order to improve the rights of members of national minorities in regard to the official use of language and script.

"Since multiculturalism and multiethnicity, and multilingualism as their characteristic, are among the greatest wealth of our Vojvodina, and we are, as such, recognizable everywhere in Europe, even in the world, it is important to preserve, nurture and improve this wealth, and we can do this only if we are united in achieving this goal," Mihalj Njilaš said, adding that one of the 11 chapters of the Action Plan for the Chapter 23 Negotiations of the Republic of Serbia refers to the use of languages and scripts.



Presentation of the Publication "Challenges of Minority Policy in Bilateral and Regional Cooperation"

Source: Forum for Ethnic Relations / Media Center
Photo: Media Center



The Forum for Ethnic Relations, with the support of the Open Society Foundation in Serbia, prepared a publication titled "Challenges of Minority Policy in Bilateral and Regional Cooperation", which was presented to the public on May 9th.

The purpose of the publication is to point out the basic elements and basic processes that have an impact on the implementation of a proactive integrative minority policy in the Republic of Serbia, as well as to point out the possibilities for enhancement of the protection of the rights and integration of national minorities, and thus the relations with neighbors in bilateral and regional cooperation and the overall process of integration into the European Union. Special attention is paid to the mutual influence of the interests of the states, both the home state and the country where national minorities live, on the one hand, and the interests of nations and national minorities (ethnicities), on the other.

Serbia tends to develop relations with the countries of the former Yugoslavia with

more difficulties, because, according to Nenad Djurdjević, Director of the Forum for Ethnic Relations, the consequences of the 1990s conflict are still felt. He noted that issues related to national minorities, in almost all countries, are frequently abused



in internal politics, despite the frequent need for politicians to portray them publicly as bridges connecting countries, which is, according to him, misleading.

"The revision of history, and the appearance of neo-fascist organizations, significantly jeopardize our relations with our neighbors.

Despite attempts by the highest representatives of Serbia and Croatia to improve relations between the two countries, many people in both countries are sceptical that these relations will eventually improve," Djurdjević said, adding that there are no major problems in Serbia's relations with Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, while cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina, not counting the Republic of Srpska, almost does not exist.

Member of the Board of Directors of the Forum for Ethnic Relations and a diplomat, Zoran Milivojević, believes that the action plans do not adequately address the position of national minorities in Serbia, and that their position and development of good neighborly relations will be among the most important issues on the Serbian path towards European Union.

"Based on the latest EU Strategy for the Western Balkans, it is clear that this issue will be crucial. Our neighbors will not give up national rhetoric, nor the one concerning the position of minorities, these issues are part of their relationship to us, but also of our relations towards them," Milivojević said.

The participants in the round table pointed out that national minorities should not represent the bridge of cooperation between the two countries, but should be part of an integrative good neighborly policy and that minorities should not be not used for political gain in internal politics.

Dr. Siniša Tatalović, former adviser to Croatian President Ivo Josipović, pointed out that it is extremely difficult to the Serbs in Croatia to exercise the right to official use of language and script in local governments because Serbs must make up more than 33% of the population in order to be able to exercise this right.

"The Croatian and the Serbian minorities, if we look at them from the perspective of one country or another, are different from the others. These are minorities that in the nineties suffered greatly and suffered great demographic changes. Therefore, these communities should be treated with more care and sensitivity than the others. Today, not only are they confronted with typical minority problems, but also with elementary living and human problems" Tatalović said.

Representative of the Croatian National Council, Darko Baštovanović, said that the Croats in Serbia expect to receive guaranteed seats in the executive branch and that their representatives also participate in the Provincial and Republican Government, in ac-



cordance with the Declaration on the Promotion of Relations and Open Issues between the Republic of Croatia and Serbia.

The publication is the result of the work



of the team of experts of the Forum for Ethnic Relations on the implementation of the project "Integrative Policies and the Position of National Minorities". The aim of this project is to contribute to the successful and efficient implementation of the Action Plan of the Republic of Serbia for strengthening the position of national minorities, as well as to improve relations between the Republic of Serbia and neighboring countries, thus strengthening the process of integration of Serbia into the European Union.

The team of experts consisted of Zoran Milivojević (Expert Team Leader), Dušan Janjić (Project Manager), Darko Baštovanović, Aleksandar Dimitrov, Duško Lopandić, Dragomir Radenković, Dr Siniša Tatalović; expert consultant was Dr. Stefano Bianchini; the editor of the analysis was Nenad Djurdjević, and the assistant to the expert team was Verka Jovanović.

The round table was attended by representatives of national councils of national minorities, representatives of the National Assembly and the Government of the Republic of Serbia, representatives of state bodies of the Republic of Serbia and AP Vojvodina, representatives of independent institutions, civil society, experts and representatives of embassies of neighboring EU member states.

Fewer Primary School Pupils than Last Year

Source: Provincial Government

In its May 9 session, the Provincial Government reviewed data on primary education and upbringing of students, with special emphasis on education in the languages of national minorities in the school year 2017/18 year and on the implementation of bilingual education in elementary and secondary schools in the territory of AP Vojvodina.

Elementary education and training in AP Vojvodina is realized in 345 regular compulsory elementary schools, attended by 144,090 pupils, which is for 1,986 students (1.36%) less than in the previous school year.

In addition to regular primary education, primary education is provided in 13 special primary schools for the education of pupils with disabilities and special needs, 21 ele-

mentary music schools, two ballet schools, two schools for elementary adult education, five private elementary schools and one private elementary ballet school.

In primary schools in the territory of AP Vojvodina, in addition to teaching in the Serbian language, classes are also conducted in five other languages: Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Ruthenian and Croatian. Pupils are also provided with classes where they can study Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Ruthenian and Croatian languages, as well as six other languages: Ukrainian, Bunjevac, Romany, Bulgarian, Macedonian and Czech, which is a total of 11 languages in the elective classes for the subject - Mother Tongue / Speech with Elements of National Culture.

Bilingual teaching in the territory of Vojvodina is being implemented in seven local

self-governments: in Novi Sad, Subotica, Pančevo, Sremska Mitrovica, Vrbas, Senta and Sremski Karlovci. Teaching is carried out in the mother tongues: Serbian, Hungarian and Croatian and in foreign languages: English, German, Russian and French.

During the School 2017/18 Year, bilingual teaching included 14 schools: 10 primary schools and four grammar schools, with a total of 1,066 pupils, deployed in 49 classes.

The provincial government, during 2017, financed primary and secondary schools that implement bilingual education in AP Vojvodina in the amount of 4,800,000.00 dinars.

The Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina is in the process of evaluating the project of bilingual teaching.

The EU Preserves and Nourishes National Cultures, Languages and Cultural Heritage

Source: Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia

With its membership in the European Union, Serbia, as it is the case with all other countries, will not lose its national, linguistic and cultural identity; moreover, the European Union supports and encourages the preservation of cultural identity, which can be seen from the fact that it invests in the reconstruction of important cultural and historical monuments throughout the country through numerous programs, was highlighted at the conference "Cultural Heritage - an Added Value for the Regions", held in the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina on April 27.

The conference was organized by the Institute of the Regions of Europe from Salzburg and the European Affairs Fund of AP Vojvodina, and local and foreign cultural stakeholders and international cultural heritage experts discussed the most effective ways of preserving cultural heritage, financing, examples of good practice, regional cultural heritage, and the ways in which it can be preserved and improved.

"Erasmus, Creative Europe, Horizon 2020 are just some of the European Union's programs through which projects in the field of preservation of cultural heritage are financed. There are cross-border cooperation programs, and, when we see the examples of the Fortress in Golubac, the Synagogue in Subotica, the Franciscan Monastery in Bač and many others that have been renewed with the help of EU funds, we can conclude how important this area is," the Head of Information, Communication and the Media in the EU Delegation to Serbia, Paul Prese said.

"We are aware of the importance of preserving cultural heritage, in the context of cultivating diversity, but its economic significance somehow remains hidden. Let me share some information with you - over 300,000 people are employed in the Cultural Heritage Sector in the European Union, and 7.8 million jobs are in some way related to cultural heritage.

This makes this sector very important from the point of view of the economy," Presa added.

President of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina, Istvan Pasztor, pointed out that cultural heritage, preservation of cultural identity and fostering multiculturalism are topics that are permanently in focus, especially in Vojvodina, and that the conference is significant due to international character, which provides an opportunity to hear different experiences in connection with the preservation of cultural heritage.

der to be able to deal with them, we need patience and time," Pasztor added.

The conference was attended by a large number of experts in the field of conservation of cultural heritage from Italy, Romania, Austria, France, Slovenia and Croatia. President of the Institute of the Regions of Europe, prof. Dr Franz Schausberger, pointed out that it is very important for Serbia, in the process of EU integration, to show the citizens of the European Union that the cultural heritage here is a part of European culture, too. He concluded that it is very important



"The common position of the speaker at the conference is that preserving cultural heritage is not about looking back, but about saving the values for the future. I think that preserving cultural heritage is essentially the ambition of creating a period of a permanent renaissance, because the Renaissance was nothing else than restoring the roots and giving these roots, that cultural heritage, new dimensions. We have a huge task arising from two circumstances - on the one hand, we have a very rich cultural heritage in this area, and on the other hand, I think that in the past period we had narrow and insufficient opportunities to deal with it. So now we have a lot of tasks, and in or-

that the public be informed that there is no danger of losing identity or the importance of culture and language when Serbia becomes a member of the EU.

"On the contrary. I have been active for 25 years at the European level and can tell you that all languages are used more than official languages. If a Catalan representative does not want to speak Spanish, he can speak Catalan and have it translated. There is no fear that your language or identity will be lost. The European Union motto is 'United in Diversity' and it is very important to foster your local identity and the EU will support it," he said.

Memorandum of Cooperation Signed between the Bosniak National Council and the National Council of the Albanian National Minority

Source: BNV

Uhe Bosniak National Council and the National Council of the Albanian National Minority signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in Novi Pazar on April 30.

The goal of signing this Memorandum is to create a common approach to a comprehensive development program, establish cooperation on joint projects, and plan joint activities in the sphere of the scope of the Councils.

"Starting from the fact that Albanians and Bosniaks are indigenous people in the area of the Preševo Valley and Sandžak, aware of the seriousness of situation in the Preševo Valley and Sandžak, we decided to conclude today's memorandum of cooperation. This day is one of the most important days for the National Council of the

Albanian National Minority, a historic moment when these two councils decided to join forces to protect and regulate the rights of our two commu-

implementation of the Action Plan for Minorities and the work on the reconstruction of minority laws that regulate the future position of minorities are

the strategic objectives of this Memorandum. It is our obligation to establish cooperation with other minorities in order to do everything to build a normal, modern state where there will be places for all peoples and where no one will be subjected to ethnic cleansing and



nities within legal jurisdictions," Albanian NMC President Ymeri concluded.

"The construction of the legal framework and definitions of the future state, as well as the implementation of all 35 chapters for the accession of our country to the European Union, the

where no one will be abused," Ugljanin emphasized.

In the end, the President of the National Council of the Albanian National Minority, Shukri Ymeri, presented a certificate of appreciation to Dr. Suljman Ugljanin.

Macedonian Community

115 Years since the Death of Goce Delčev Marked

Source: RTV Pančevo

By laying a wreath at the monument to Goce Delčev, in front of the elementary school in Jabuka, 115th anniversary of the death of this Macedonian national educator and revolutionary was marked. The wreaths were laid by representatives of the Macedonian Embassy in Serbia, organizations and associations of Macedonians in Serbia, as well as representatives of the city of Pančevo and Jabuka Community.

On the occasion of the 115th anniversary of the death of Goce Delčev, the National Council of the Macedonian National Minority organized a Day of Remembrance of this Macedonian revolutionary and national educator. The flowers were laid on the memorial bust, located in the yard of the primary school in Jabuka bearing its name, by representatives of the Macedonian Embassy, represen-

tatives of the Macedonian Association in Serbia, and representatives of the town of Pančevo and Jabuka Community.

"For the ideals and freedom of the Macedonian people, Goce Delčev gave what is most valuable, his life," Borče Veličkovski, President of the National Council of the Macedonian National Minority in Serbia, said.

Ružić Meets with Representatives of the Aromanians

Source: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government



In April 20, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government Branko Ružić spoke with the representatives of the Serbian-Aromanian Society "Lunjina" about the position of this minority community and the exercise of their right to preserve identity, culture and language.

At the meeting, it was pointed out that the Aromanians were one of the oldest indigenous Balkan nations that significantly contributed to the building of our society. Representatives of the Serbian-Aromanian Society "Lunjina" reminded of the prominent representatives of Serbian li-



terature and culture that were of Aromanian origin, such as Borislav Pekić, Branislav Nušić, Jovan Sterija Popović and others. The members of this community have entrusted to Serbia endowments such as the building of today's Rectorate,

cognize the contribution of the Aromanian community and advocate the preservation of the tradition, culture and language of both the Aromanians and all the other small communities in Serbia," Ružić said.

Captain Misha's building, the Regional Museum in Zemun, etc.

Minister Ružić said that, although at this moment there are no conditions for the Aromanian community to form its national council of a national minority, other mechanisms for exercising their rights are available.

"The Ministry and the Government clearly re-

Bulgarian Community

KUD Caribrod Wins the Special Award of the Director of the "Shopski Naniz 2018" Festival in Kostinbrod

Source: www.far.rs



The first ensemble of the Cultural-Artistic Society "Caribrod" won another award at the 9th International Folk Festival "Shopski Naniz 2018", which took place in the Bulgarian town of Kostinbrod from April 27 to 29. This year Dimitrovgrad's folk group received a special award from the Festival's Director.

"With the enormous commitment of the entire ensemble, we have won yet another significant recognition and completed our rich collection of awards. I think that the prize was also earned by the ruling of a five-member expert jury, which consists of well-known choreographers, singers and connoisseurs of folklore creativity, and based on the reception of the audience. I would like to thank all of our performers for their efforts, as well as the organizers and the Director of the Festival, Alexander Nenov.

Winning the award in the competition of hundreds of folklore groups, vocal soloists and singing groups with over 2,200 participants is a great honor," Dalibor Gligorov, Artistic Director of the Society said.

Accompanied by the folk orchestra, the KUD "Caribrod" presented themselves with choreographies "Ponišavlje" and "Thrace", while young vocal soloist Helena Stojanov performed two folk melodies - "Ah kad je e moja libe" and "Katarina mome".

Last year, Dimitrovgrad Cultural and Art Society "Caribrod" won the award for the best foreign ensemble. They won the same prize in 2015 and 2016, while, in 2014, they won the "Grand Prix" of the "Shopski Naniz" Fe-



stival, which, this year, gathered a number of ensembles from different ethnographic areas of Bulgaria, including cultural and artistic societies from Dimitrovgrad, Babušnica, Gadžin Han and Sokobanja from the Republic of Serbia.

The festival was organized by Kostinbrod Municipality, National Library "Ivan Vazov - 1947",

National Library "St. Cyril and Methodius" and the National Theater "Zarja - 1914" from Kostinbrod. The folklore performers from Dimitrovgrad are now waiting for participation in the international folklore festival "Nišavski Horovod" in Dragoman on May 20.

The Subotica Synagogue Reconsecrated

Source: RTV Pannon

The Subotica Synagogue was reconsecrated on May 7 by ceremonial setting Torah to its place.

The Jewish Holy Book, Torah, was put in its place in the renewed synagogue in Subotica during a special reconsecration ceremony. The President of the Jewish Religious Community of Hungary, Andras Hajzer, said he was happy that the Subotica Synagogue, thanks to the help of Serbia and Hungary, again shines with its old beauty. The President of the Jewish Community of Serbia, Robert Sabadoš, emphasized that, after more than four decades of reconstruction, with the setting up of Torah, it regained its original religious function.



Before the reconsecration, a hanukiah, a nine-branched candelabrum, was officially handed over in the yard, representing the gift of the Jewish Religious Community of Hungary to the Subotica Synagogue.

The President of the Jewish Religious Community of Hungary, Andras Hajzer,

commended this achievement, especially since the Subotica Synagogue was restored with the cooperation of the two governments. "It was the second largest synagogue of the former Hungary. The largest was a synagogue in Dohanj Street, the second in size was in Subotica, and the third in Szeged. A fantastic building has been restored here jointly by the Serbian and Hungarian governments. I think that this can be an example for Europe as well. The unique features of the building have been preserved. This style, this kind of artistic work, it cannot be matched in any other building in the world," Hajzer said.

Dragana Milošević Laid a Wreath at the Memorial to the Victims of the Novi Sad Jews Deportation

Source: Provincial Government

By laying wreaths and flowers under the memorial plaque at the Novi Sad Synagogue, on April 26, the Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities, Dragana Milošević paid tribute to the Jews, who died on April 26, 1944.

"The Day of Remembrance of the Deportation of Novi Sad Jews, exactly 74 years ago, reminds us of the horrors and sufferings that our fellow citizens experienced, when they were taken to the death camps, and most notably to the notorious Auschwitz. Today we have gathered together to pay homage to those who were killed because they were of other religion and other nationality. The Day of Remembrance of the suffering of these innocent people is a warning to the generations to come to show the beauty of universal living values, the right to religion and diversity, in order to ensure that these horrors never happen again," Dragana

Milošević said at the commemorative rally on 74 the anniversary of the deportation of Novi Sad Jews to notorious camps.

The commemorative program was organized by the Jewish Municipality of Novi Sad, and, on this occasion, the chief rabbi of Serbia, Isak Asiel, and the President of the Jewish Municipality of Novi Sad, Mirko

Adam, addressed the audience. On behalf of the City of Novi Sad, the wreath was laid by Mayor Milos Vučević.

The Day of Remembrance of the Deportation of Novi Sad Jews in 1944 is marked every April 26th. Of the 1,900 deported Novi Sad Jews, 1,600 never returned from the Nazi concentration camps.



Consultations on Work of National Minority Councils and Minority Media

Source: RTV Pannon

On April 26, in Subotica, a consultation was held between the leaders of the Hungarian and Albanian National Minority Councils (NMCs) on minority issues and the work of national councils.

Representatives of the national minority councils of the Hungarian and Albanian national minorities in Serbia jointly held

tional Minority Council briefed their Albanian colleagues on their work, especially on the situation in the media, on minority education, as well as on the competencies of NMCs. The President of the Hungarian NMC, Jene Hajnal, said that these issues included the method of selecting headmasters in schools, provision of textbooks, the school network, activities of the Hungarian NMC,

sphere of minority education and the media into their programs, because they have many shortcomings in that area. Albanian NMC President Shukri Ymeri said that he appreciated the possibility to talk to the representatives of the Hungarian NMC about the issues of education, culture, and information, and how to exercise the rights provided by the law. "I can say that we are in a worse position on these issues," Ymeri said.

The talks were held in the presence of representatives of the OSCE Delegation in Serbia, whose associates consider it important that there is a constant dialogue between national minorities living in the state. According to them, the work of the Hungarian NMC could be an example to other minorities. OSCE Adviser, Milica Rodić, says that the Hungarian NMC is most active and its work is most visible. In spite of the fact that the communities and national minority councils face numerous problems, she says that she believes that many good results can be applied in the work of other national councils, who are facing even more problems.

Representatives of Pannon RTV, "Het Nap" and "Magyar Szo" took part in the part of the consultations dedicated to the media.



talks with representatives of the Delegation of the European Organization for Security and Cooperation in Serbia. The discussion focused on the status of minority media and the work of NMCs.

Representatives of the Hungarian Na-

implementation of the Council's plan, cooperation with local self-governments and institutions, etc.

Representatives of the Albanian National Minority Council said that, in the first place, they want to incorporate the Vojvodina experiences from the

Hungarian Community

Educational Equipment for "Paulinum" and Music School

Source: www.vajma.info

In the educational policy of the Hungarian National Minority Council, one of priorities is support to grammar schools and art secondary schools, and, on April 24, in accordance with this policy and thanks to the material assistance from Hungary, the Council presented packages with modern educational technical means to two

schools in Subotica.

The President of the Executive Board of the Hungarian National Minority Council, Aniko Jeras, and Marta Petković, a member of this body, visited the Classical Bishop Grammar School and Pupils' Dormitory "Paulinum" and handed over the gift packages, and the same delegation also delivered

presents to the Music School in Subotica.

Thanks to this campaign, with the funds granted by the Hungarian Government and the Betlen Gabor Foundation, 1,165,000 dinars are available to the Hungarian National Minority Council for educational technical support to schools in Vojvodina.

Second Session of the Coordination Body for Monitoring of the Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia

Source: National Council of the Roma National Minority

The improvement of the position of the Roma national community in the fields of education, employment, health care and housing were the topics of the session of the Coordination Body for Monitoring of the Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia, held on April 24, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Zorana Mihajlović.

"We have started many important activities, some have already been implemented, while others are in progress. We have worked on improving living conditions, we have, for the first time,

signed a cooperation agreement with the Roma National Minority Council as the state, we have achieved results in the field of education, and today we have hundreds of Roma youths who graduate from the faculties, we have a number of health mediators, we have adopted a strategy and an action plan. But this is not enough. The Government of Serbia is committed to improving the

position of Roma men and Roma women in our society, and this is our main goal," Mihajlović said.

The Deputy Prime Minister presented today the members of the Coordination Body with an initiative to abolish the quota for enrolling members

of the Roma community in the society in which all members are equal," Mihajlović said.

Tefik Ramadanović, President of the National Council of the Roma National Minority, thanked the Deputy Prime Minister for her efforts to improve the situation of Roma men and Roma women in Serbia.

"The National Council recognizes the Serbian Government as the most important partner in efforts to reduce the discrimination and stereotypes that exist towards Roma. We will give full contribution to improve the position of our minority. The initiative to abolish enrollment quotas

is a major step forward, so that all of our children who want to learn have the opportunity to do that," Ramadanović said.

Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, and Head of the Negotiating Team for EU Accession, Tanja Mišćević, agreed that today's session is very important for further process of improving the position of the Roma community in Serbia, but also the next steps in Serbia's accession to the European Union.

The session of the Coordination Body was also attended by representatives of the Ministries of Finance, Health, Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Justice, Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, the UN Human Rights Team, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team, the EU Delegation to Serbia, as well as representatives of the National Council of the Roma National Minority.



Portraits of Mihail Djurovka

Photo: Hlas Ijudu

Uhe exhibition "Portraits" by academic painter Mihail Djurovka from Kisač opened on April 28 at the Zuzka Medveđova Gallery in Bački Petrovac. Previously, the exhibition adorned the galleries in Kovačica and Kisač.

The participants were greeted by Ana Seč Pinčir, Director of the Museum of Vojvodina Slovaks, and the exhibition was opened by Rina Krulj, an academic painter and, at the same time, Djurovka's colleague from the studies.



Vladimir Valenčik, an art critic, talked more about portraits. He emphasized that the exhibition contains 220 portraits of people close to the author

of the exhibition, who successfully presents his work in Slovakia. The latest exhibition contains portraits created during the painter's studies, as well as those that, as Valenčik stressed, were created the day before the exhibition in Petrovac.

The exhibition was financially supported by the National Council of the Slovak National Minority and the Municipality of Bački Petrovac.

The Province Helps Projects of the Slovak National Minority

Source: RTV

Uwo projects of importance for the culture and art of the Slovak national minority in the municipality of Stara Pazova, out of the total of 16 in AP Vojvodina, which will be co-financed by the Provincial

Secretariat for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities, are the 49th Festival of Amateur Theater Works of Slovaks "Theater Laurel", supported with the amount of 85.000 dinars, and the 25th Festival of Slovak Children's

Theater Production, which will be co-financed with 50.000 dinars.

Both projects are implemented by the Slovak Cultural and Art Society "Hero Janko Čmelik" in Stara Pazova.

Ruthenian Community

The Building Used by the Ruthenian Cultural Center to Be Demolished Soon

Source: Rutenpres

At the session of the Steering Board of the Novi Sad Ruthenian Cultural Center, the President of the Board of Directors, Vladimir Ivan, the Chairman of the Church Committee of the Novi Sad Greek Catholic Parish of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and the member of the Board of the Ruthenian Cultural Center, Borislav Sakač, and the Director of the Center, Nataša Makaji Mudroh, informed Board members that part of the building which is used by the Ruthenian Cultural Center, owned by the church, will be demolished at the end of June this year.



Construction company "Artec group" DOO has collected the necessary documentation and, in late June, they will start with demolition of the existing building and preparation of the site for the construction of a new building at 10 Jovana Subotića St, where the offices used by the Ruthenian Cultural Center are located.

According to the President of the Managing Board of the Ruthenian Cultural Center, Vladimir Ivan, building located at the number 8 in the same street, where the Ruthenian company "Matka" is located, will not be safe for use until the investor begins to build a new building at the number 10, so, during that time, a

solution must be found for unimpeded work of the Ruthenian Cultural Center. He added that he hopes that, in light of many years of tradition and cooperation, the Church will foresee a space for the work of the Center in the new building, too.

As stated at the session, the "Veselinka" Children's Festival, regardless of the new situation, will be held on June 9th, as planned.

In the forthcoming period, the move of Center will also have to be organized, and the Center appeals to all members and supporters to respond in as many numbers as possible to help with the move.

Consecration of Grain in Lemeš

Source: Bunjevac Media Center

Un organization of BKC "Lemeški Bunjevci" from Svetozar Miletić, and with support of the UK "Bunjevac Culture Center" and the Bunjevac National Minority Council, April 25, the Day of St. Marko, was ceremoniously marked.

According to tradition and customs, the holy Mass was served in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lemeš.

Rev. Egedi Antal performed the blessing of grain on the field of Marija Maravić in Lemeš. According to the church ritual, turning to all four sides of the world, the parish blessed



all the fields of the fertile Bačka.

Among the attendees were the representatives of the Bunjevac National Mi-

nority Council (BNMC): Mirko Bajić - the president of the BNMC Executive Board, Kata Kuntić - the president of the BNMC Culture Committee, Branko Pokornić - member of the BNMC Executive Board, and other members of the Bunjevac institutions and the citizens of Lemeš, who came to visit Markovo.

The St. Marko Day ritual is based on the belief that the power of this Saint will protect the grain from the bad weather. There is a plan to preserve the custom of grain blessing and bring this tradition closer to the younger generations.

"Be Literate - Didactic Literacy Is the Future"

Un the organization of the Bunjevac Youth Center, under the slogan: "Be Literate - Didactic Literacy is the Future", the basic informatics training started for pupils who attend the class "Bunjevac Language with Elements of National Culture" in their schools.



The training is held at the Information Center of the Bunjevac Youth Center in cooperation with the private school "Gaudeamus".

The training is free of charge and aims at preparing fourth-grade pupils for IT classes, introduced in schools as a compulsory fifth-grade course.

Children Workshop "Magic of Masks"

On May 3, the Bunjevac Youth Center and UG "Bunjevac Kasa" held a children's workshop "The Magic of Masks" in the premises of the Gaudeamus "Studio M" in Subotica.

The theme of this workshop was related to making children's masks from various materials. The goal of the workshop is participation of the children in the manifestation "Night of Museums", as they will have the opportunity to exhibit their works in the program of "KUD Bunjevka", which will be held on May 19th.

This workshop was attended by the pupils of the elementary school "Sveti Sava" from Subotica with the teacher Mirjana Lončarević.



Training on How to Use “European” Money to Solve Problems of Our Society

Source: National Council of the Czech National Minority

The training entitled "Funding Possibilities through EU Funds" was held in Bela Crkva from April 25 to 27 in cooperation with the European Union Fund of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the National Council of the Czech National Community.

During the three-day training, the participants got the opportunity to acquire basic skills in writing IPA projects under cross-border cooperation programs between countries. This will serve as a starting point for further training on this topic, in order to form a way of thinking in solving the social problems with which the students daily meet in their surrounding, as one of the trainers, the expert associate for European projects of the Fund "European Affairs" of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Dejana Luković, explained.

"In the course of the training, a practical part has been organized, which aims at preparing participants for drafting of independent project proposals, directing them to think about potential partner institutions and teaching them how to approach the development of the project structure through the preparation of a logical matrix and preparation of the project budget, which will result in project ideas that will represent significant experience for students", Luković said, pointing out that the task of the lecturers is to bring to each individual a new, project-based way of thinking.

As everyone is well aware of the problem of lack of financial resources for ensuring the smooth functioning of the national minority councils, including the National Council of the Czech National Minority, the Council initiated cooperation with the Fund with the desire to improve its work. According to the Head of the Communication Service with the non-governmental sector, local self-governments and the Republic and Provincial authorities in the European Affairs Fund, Milan Čížek, after they had learned of the fi-



nancial problems of the Council, the cooperation was realized in order to explain to members of the Council the possibilities for applying for significant funds that could be withdrawn from Europe in order to improve the functioning of the Council. On this occasion, he noted that he had personally initiated the idea of



founding the Association of Czechs in Novi Sad, and concluded that better conditions for the work of the National Council will certainly help to improve the position of the Czech minority in Vojvodina.

The training was opened by the President of the National Council of the Czech National Community, prof. dr. Jože Sivaček, and the training was attended by members of the Council from the territory of Bela Crkva and the surrounding towns.

A total of 18 participants were divided into three groups each of which had their own theme: one was based on the problem of insufficient involvement of

children of Czech nationality of pre-school and school age in the cultural and social life of the environment, the second problem that the participants recognized in their environment was the lack of network of capacities to offer tourist services and products for Czech tourists in the Banat area on the Romanian and Serbian sides, and the third project proposal focused on the lack of capacity to promote old Czech cuisine in the territory of Banat.

As a part of the newly acquired knowledge, the participants learned the terminology used in writing IPA projects, including the terms such as the priority axis, what is the overall goal of the project and what are the specific goals, then they had the opportunity to learn how to test their idea of how to approach the preparation of the logical matrix through the tree problems and tree goals, which lay down the "project in small", that is, summarize the entire project, and many other useful skills in this field.

After the narrative part of the project preparation, the participants were most interested in the financial part, that is, the budgeting, so the third day of training was dedicated to this topic. After theoretical explanation of budgeting, the tasks were assigned to participants to implement the newly acquired knowledge and get answers to their questions. An independent expert in the European Affairs Fund, Jano Puskar, led this part of the training, stating that the project budgeting is an integral and very important part of each project.

"External sources of multinational financing, such as IPA cross-border cooperation programs, are a significant opportunity to fund certain regular activities or projects that users want to implement," Puškar said, praising the work of a group of participants in this course, adding that it is always a pleasure for lecturers to work in groups who are interested in getting involved in the discussion.



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