

**Ružić Discusses the Forthcoming
Elections for National Minority
Councils with Representatives
of Minorities**

**Seventh Report on the Implementation
of the Action Plan for the Realization of
the Rights of National Minorities
Presented**

47 Minority News

june 2018



Ivan Bošnjak: National Councils Are Still Insufficiently Recognized Bodies

**Languages and Scripts of
National Minorities in the
Parliament**

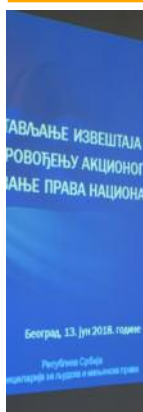
**"The Home Guardian"
Started from Bačko
Petrovo Selo**

HIGHLIGHTS



Minister Branko Ružić Meets with Representatives of National Minority Councils

During the meeting of representatives of national minority councils with Branko Ružić, the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, held at the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority on May 23, the participants discussed the new law regulating the position of minorities. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Hungarian, Croatian, Bunjevac, German minorities and the Union of Jewish Municipalities.



Seventh Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for Minorities

Presenting of the Seventh Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Realization of the Rights of National Minorities on June 13, Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, stressed that this report refers to the first quarter of 2018 and that the implementation of activities from the Action Plan for Minorities is regularly monitored. Paunović stated that a total of 111 activities envisaged by the Action Plan for the Realization of the Rights of National Minorities have been completed and that, of 75 implementers of activities, 63 have submitted contributions to the Report.



Getting to Know Each Other Through a Multi-Lingual Quiz

As a part of the project of the Provincial Government "Affirmation of Multiculturalism and Tolerance in Vojvodina" Kanjiža, Kovačica and Sombor hosted the regional quizzes for secondary school students "How Much Do We Know Each Other?" from the 12th Cycle. The organizer and implementer of the project is the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities - National Communities of AP Vojvodina.



Festival "Kalina" Held For the Fifteenth Time

On June 9-10, the 15th Ukrainian Culture Festival "Kalina" was held. This year's festival took place in the Cultural Center "Kula" in Kula. Specific for this festival is that it is held in five cities alternately, where a large number of Ukrainians live. The importance of the festival is also reflected in the fact that all cultural societies that cherish Ukrainian culture in the Republic of Serbia participate in it and, during festival days, present the audience with choreographies and songs that they prepared during previous twelve months.

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Discrimination at Work

Prior to forwarding the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on National Minority Councils to the Parliament, Branko Ružić, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, reminded that the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government has prepared four laws in the field of promotion of rights and position of members of national minorities to better conditions for the realization of their rights in the fields of culture, information, employment, and education.

It is the area of education that is at the center of attention every year, and this traditionally happens in the end and in the beginning of the school year.

While primary and secondary schools that teach in minority languages are struggling with an ever-decreasing number of enrolled students and trying to attract new students in as many ways as possible, some faculties seem to be trying to discourage, even repel, future students - members of minority communities. More precisely, the Faculty of Law in Novi Sad, for which the Appellate Court earlier ruled that it discriminated against Hungarian students because it did not allow the entrance exam in the languages of national minorities, is again in the focus of the public. The website of the Faculty states that a member of a national minority whose mother tongue is an official language in the territory of the AP Vojvodina can apply for the entrance examination in his mother tongue on the basis of his personal request, but it is also envisaged to have a written and oral verification of the proficiency of the language in which the teaching is conducted, i.e. the Serbian language, which is organized after passing the entrance exam, before determining the standings of candidates for enrollment. This decision of the Faculty was condemned by students, mostly members of the Hungarian national minority, as discriminatory. The National Council of the Hungarian National Minority thinks it is discrimination which puts some students in a worse position and that it is a provocation of the Faculty of Law, which not only jeopardizes the equality of minority education in the mother tongue in Serbia, but also treats pupils studying in minority languages as second class citizens.

Mihail Njilaš, Deputy Prime Minister of the Provincial Government and Provincial Secretary for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities - National Communities, expressed the expectation that "the Faculty of Law will, in a short time, realize that it is a discriminatory step and that they will give up on this practice." However, at the time of writing this text, there are still old rules for passing the entrance exam on the Faculty's website. No change whatsoever.

30 different national minorities live in Serbia



National Councils Are Still Insufficiently Recognized Bodies

After more than two years of work on the preparation of amendments to the two key minority policy laws, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted draft laws amending the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities and the Law on Amendments to the Law on National Minority Councils and sent them to the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia for adoption. The draft amendments to the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities were finalized more than a year ago and we discussed them in great detail at that time. Today, we will address amendments to the other key law, the Law on National Minority Councils, with Ivan Bošnjak, State Secretary in the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.



How would you rate the whole process of preparing amendments to these laws? To what extent has this process been transparent and inclusive?

I can say with great pride that, in the past four years, between the two cycles of elections for national minority councils, I have been tasked with overseeing the entire process. In 2014, when the then Minister of the Public Administration and Local Self Government was the Deputy Prime Minister, Kori Udovički, my colleagues and I entered a serious dialogue with the national

councils of national minorities. The work of the Republic Council for National Minorities has been established, and now, in practice, the Prime Minister, or the then Prime Minister, and the highest representatives of state bodies meet with representatives of national minority councils. In the meantime, the Action Plan for Chapter 23 and the so-called Special Action Plan for Improving the Position of National Minorities have been ratified. During the process of implementation of the activities from this plan, we have also come to the amendments of two key laws concerning the

rights of members of national minorities and I can say with great pleasure that we have done a great job. As you said, a year ago we completed the work on the amendments to the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, which had originally been adopted in 2002 under completely different conditions and, I would say, in another state, in the then State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. It was necessary to modernize this law, but also to bring some solutions into it, so that other regulations concerning the rights of national minorities, not only from

the portfolio of this ministry, could be modernized or used in full. To this end, as one of the key amendments to this law, we have introduced the possibility of registration of nationality in the public registers. This will, in turn, enable us to enter this data into the registries, and after that, we will implement all the other activities that we mentioned: take care of the education of national minorities, enable further development of culture and in general minority life in all parts of our country, as well as employment of members of national minorities, especially in those parts of the state where equal representation has not been achieved.

The other law, the Law on National Councils of National Minorities, partially underwent changes following the decisions of the Constitutional Court in 2014, and, with these changes, we entered the election cycle of that year. According to the Law, elections for national councils have since been conducted by the Republic Electoral Commission. We have now regulated everything else that was not sufficiently precise and clearly stated, from the very status of the national council as a legal person to the position of elected persons, certain functions, employment within national councils, and many other issues that have opened up in the meantime with the development of minority policies in Serbia and the adoption of these legal solutions. The Law on National Councils of National Minorities was ratified in 2009, and the elections under this law were organized for the first time in 2010. In 2014, we had decisions of the Constitutional Court. The same year, the first amendments were made, and I would say that we have now finally brought this work to completion.

The Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on National Minority Councils, which until recently was the subject of a public hearing, has been received with numerous complaints from national councils of national minorities, professional public and civil society. What are the most significant shortcomings of the Draft the representatives of national coun-

cils indicated pointed to?

We can talk about previous shortcomings. I would not say that the current legal solution, that is, this Draft has any shortcomings. Of course, the final word on the Law will be said by the deputies, as legitimate representatives of citizens in the Republic of Serbia. After this Draft Law has passed the parliamentary debate, after it has been adopted by the majority vote in the Assembly, it will get its final form, and it will be up to us to implement it jointly and fully. The

Amendments to Fundamental Minority Policy Laws Adopted on June 20

On June 20, 2018, the National Assembly ratified Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on the National Councils of National Minorities, Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, and Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Official Use of Language and Script.

questions received from the expert public also included those on what national minority councils were, and we have come to a correct definition that they are non-state forms of organizations, most similar by their nature to citizens' associations. Given that representatives national minorities are elected into these bodies in two ways, by electoral system and by classical representational system, they have the possibility to have their own administration. The Draft Law envisages who can be employed as well as employment procedures to be followed. The aforementioned provisions have been defined in consultations and agreement with the members of the working group, which, in addition to representatives

of numerous state institutions, also included five representatives of the Coordination National Councils of National Minorities. The working group held a large number of sessions. We have jointly defined who can be employed and in what way, what is the position of elected officials in a national minority council and how they can regulate their labor rights. We have come to the conclusion that only the president of the national council and the president of the executive board should be able to be formally employed in the council during their mandates, thus preventing some of the abuses that were observed in the previous period. Also, one of the key solutions suggested to us by respected international experts, such as Professor Hoffman, who was hired by the EU and the Council of Europe as an expert in this field, is that, due to the observed practice of over-politicization, a special attention must be given to depoliticization. To this end, we introduced a limitation of functions within political parties and national minority councils, which may have been a subject to criticism. In the democratic practice of Serbia, however, the national minority councils are still insufficiently recognizable bodies of minority self-government. As the professional public noted, national minority councils have thus far been reserved for a number of political representatives, as, in most cases, it was the political parties of national minorities who had the opportunity to propose candidates for the national councils. As a consequence, national minority councils are insufficiently recognizable, particularly among the younger generations. From 2014 to 2018, there is a large number of young people who have become of age in the last four years, from 2014 to 2018, and, as registering of these new voters in the Special Voters Registry is done on a voluntary basis, our common task, task of members of national minorities, representatives of the state, and the media, is to urge these young people to engage in minority politics. Thus we will strive to promote, on the one hand, the rights and the benefits of the community as a whole, and, on the other, putting political issues on the margin and really taking into account the every-

day life of every citizen of our country, regardless of their ethnic origin.

The Coordination of National Minority Councils submitted a document with seven key points jointly formulated by national councils as the main flaws of the Draft Law. Has any of these comments and proposals been assessed as positive and acceptable and can they be found in the final version of the Draft?

We could not agree on these seven key points in the working group, and I would like to emphasize that discussions during sessions of the working group lasted for hours, sometime even for nine hours. In total, 11 such working group sessions were held and we had five public hearings, i.e. consultative meetings throughout the Republic of Serbia, from Bujanovac to Subotica, through Novi Pazar and Kučevo, where we presented the Law to the stakeholders, and, in the end, we organized a large round table here in Belgrade. These key seven proposals were presented to the Prime Minister and she decided that they, too, should be included in the Draft Law, so now we are presenting a complete proposal before the deputies. Of course, there is always room for further improvement of the Draft Law and, as it is defined in the Constitution, their final versions will be defined by the parliamentary majority through possible amendments. This area is always politically interesting, but I am sure that it concerns the lives of each of us, it also affects the development of democracy, and personal rights and freedom of expression. I hope that everything that is possible, what is proposed in a good and constructive spirit, will be adopted.

Can we expect that the adoption of amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities will contribute to improving the legal framework for the realization of the rights of members of minority communities?

The legal framework related to national minorities in the Republic of Serbia has already been assessed by the communities themselves as good. We have now

really adjusted this legal framework to the modern functioning of the administration, but also to all those requirements that the development of democracy in Serbia has demanded. We expect that once the Law has been passed, it is really our common duty to make our fellow citizens who live in Kanjiža feel equal and in the same way as someone who lives in Belgrade, Novi Pazar and Tutin. Likewise, we expect that everything that is available to the citizens of Kragujevac, is also valid for the citizens of Bosilegrad or Preševo. In this way, Serbia is becoming a leader in realization of the rights of national minorities, and it is this particular quality, which has been recognized by our partners from the EU, that we are bringing as a special value to the Union. Vojvodina has been already recognized as a region where the rights of national minorities are exercised at the highest possible level, perhaps in the best way throughout Europe. Our task was to spread this good Vojvodina practice to the south of the Sava and the Danube rivers.

Will the adoption of the Law contribute to the harmonization of measures with the Action Plan for Chapter 23 for the Realization of the Rights of National Minorities, as well as the harmonization of the Law with the decisions of the Constitutional Court, which declared certain provisions of the old law unconstitutional in 2014?

This has been the framework for our activities. First, there was the Action Plan that we prepared in good practice and consultations with national minority councils at the end of 2015, and then adopted it in 2016. Next, we also adopted amendments to these key laws. This will complete the activities that the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government has put before us, and thus we will contribute to the implementation of the Action Plan for Chapter 23. We have carefully looked into the rulings of the Constitutional Court and we hope that the new law, the one we are now talking about, and these amendments to the law will not have to be re-examined by the Constitutional Court. We also hope that, in the next four years, we will be able to focus more on what

is ahead of us, as there are issues in other laws that have, in the meantime, emerged, such as the representation of national minorities in the Republican Parliament, and, of course, on the provincial and local levels, then, perhaps, the new model of the electoral system, etc... A new cycle of elections for national minority councils is ahead of us, and I think that it is important that, in the next few months, namely until November 4, when the elections will be held, we urge as many citizens as possible to participate in this process, and elect new leaderships that will, with their constructive proposals and work, participate in improving the lives of their compatriots, and our citizens, citizens of the Republic of Serbia.

Given that the final draft versions of both draft laws have entered the parliamentary procedure, is there a way for the remarks and proposals of national councils and professional public to be incorporated into new laws?

Write to your deputies, and the public will learn about your comments and proposals, at least on live TV broadcasts of the parliamentary debate. After that, the deputies will consider them and they may be included in the Law if it is decided by the majority vote. This is my call and advice to all stakeholders. I would also like to add that, this autumn, with the elections for national minority councils, we will have specially designed electronic applications for the Special Voters Registry on the local level. It was noticed that there was no electronic link between the Unified Voters' Registry and the Special Voters Registry, and now we have resolved this issue. Of course, all data on nationality is still protected by the Law. This special web service will help you in the event of a change of address, change of data in the Unified Voters Registry, or in your personal ID card, register these changes in the Special Voters Registry, that is, update all information in the event of a change in any data concerning the residence address, surname or other information related to a citizen who is enlisted in the Special Voters Registry, and wishes to vote for his/her national council.

Minister Branko Ružić Meets with Representatives of National Minority Councils

Source: Subotica.com

On May 23, a meeting of representatives of national councils and Branko Ružić, the minister of state administration and local self-government, was held at the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority, to discuss the new law regulating the position of minorities, which has been ratified by the Serbian Government of Serbia, and forwarded to the parliamentary procedure.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the Hungarian, Croatian, Bunjevac, German minorities and the Federation of Jewish Municipalities, who were informed that the draft laws entering the parliamentary procedure clearly define the functioning of national councils, the rights and freedoms of members of national minorities, and the official use of the language.

"The Law on National Councils of National Minorities is one of the three laws we all worked together in a committed and inclusive way. The Coordination of the National Minority Councils has given a large number of constructive proposals that have been accepted and now we need to do the fine tuning of some of the issues that minority representatives have insisted on, and I expect that, after that, we will have the final and comprehensive draft that will be endorsed by the Government of the Republic of Serbia and forwarded to the Parliament," Minister Branko Ružić said. "We will try to reduce



excessive politicization in line with the recommendations of the Council of Europe, introduce more transparent financing of national councils and solve all the inconsistencies in the practice that we have identified together thus far," Ružić added.

He also reminded that this year is extremely important for all members of minorities, given the coming elections for new national councils in the autumn.

"Members of national minorities make up almost 13% of the total population of Serbia. The election cycle is regular and expected and national minority councils are required to undertake the necessary activities and measures so that all minority members are informed about registration in the Special Voters Registry, and, after the elections have been slated, about the voting procedures. National minority councils are bodies through which national minorities exercise the Constitutionally guaranteed self-government in the established areas of social life - education,

culture, information, use of languages and scripts, and it is therefore important that citizens are informed in time about all activities during this election process," Ružić said.

Representatives of national councils based in our town also took part in the drafting of the laws, and, as they say, many of their suggestions are accepted and will be included in the new text of the law.

"As we had our member in the working group, from the beginning of the drafting of the law, which has lasted for a year and a half, we have managed to incorporate everything that has been a stumbling block so far," Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić, President of the National Council of the Bunjevac National Minority says. "Small national communities, those who do not have a standardized language, who are just struggling to form their own institutions, have problems in the field of education, information, financing ... Our community constitutes 9.57 percent of Subotica population, and the law recognizes a minority if it makes ten percent of the overall population or has an official language. We have neither one nor the other, and this new law should recognize the national minority councils in a similar position, which will help us resolve the financing problems. We have done the standardization of our language, but it has not been recognized yet, as it is a political issue, like the abolition of the 1945 Decree."

Ružić Discusses the Forthcoming Elections for National Minority Councils with Representatives of Minorities

Source: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government

On June 13, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Branko Ružić, and President of the Republic Electoral Commission (RIK), Vladimir Dimitrijević, signed in the National Assembly the Agreement on the specification of the total planned expenditures for the needs of the elections of members of national councils of national minorities that will be held this year.

Minister Ružić said that this is the beginning of the preparations for the elections that are to be slated in August, and held no later than November this year, and that the Ministry, together with RIK, will conduct these elections.

After the signing of the Agreement, Minister

Ružić and MP Libuška Lakatoš held a meeting with deputies and representatives of national councils on the provisions of the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on National Minorities Councils, in relation to the Special Voters Registry.

"In order to make the elections even more transparent and efficient, we have created a new application for the Special Voters Registry, which will be put in place for these elections," the Minister said.

Ružić reminded representatives of national councils of national minorities that registration in the Special Voters Registry is on a voluntary basis, and it is important to inform citizens in time about registration opportu-

nities, and those who have already registered, to check their data before the set deadline.

Given the fact that there are three minority policy laws on the agenda of the extraordinary session of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, the Minister said that the conditions for the realization of the rights of national minorities will be significantly improved, since the new laws will provide for voluntary registration of the nationality into the registries, geographical names and signs in the languages of minorities in certain communities, use of the mother tongue by the minority MPs in the National Assembly, as well as more transparent and efficient work of national councils.

Seventh Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Realization of the Rights of National Minorities Presented

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights

Presenting the Seventh Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Realization of the Rights of National Minorities, Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, noted on June 13, that this report refers to the first quarter of 2018 and that the implementation of activities from the Action Plan for Minorities is regularly monitored.

Paunović stated that a total of 111 activities envisaged by the Action Plan for the Realization of the Rights of National Minorities have been completed and that, of 75 implementers of activities, 63 have submitted contributions to the Report.

Paunović added that 45 local self-government units submitted their contributions for the Seventh Report and that the Government paid much attention to cooperation with local self-government units in which members of minority communities live.



The Prime Minister is insisting on frequent sessions of the Republic Council for National Minorities, and the Office provides full support to this, Paunović emphasized.

The trainings that were held in the previous period have achieved their goal, to improve the quality of reporting of local governments, which know best the needs and problems faced by members of national minorities, and the data we receive from them contribute to a clearer picture that the reports present, the Director of the Office assessed.

In the course of the collection of annexes for the Eighth Reporting cycle, the Office will focus on further improving of the monitoring system of the Action Plan, Paunović said, stressing that the support to all persons participating in the reporting process will continue in order to improve their work and mutual cooperation.

The meeting was attended by representatives of state and provincial bodies and institutions, international and civil society organizations, as well as representatives of national councils of national minorities.

Ružić: Four New Laws on National Minorities to Be Endorsed This Year

Source: N1 / RTS

Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Branko Ružić, announced that, by the end of June, the Serbian National Assembly will have discussed four legal proposals aimed at improving the status of national minorities and more transparent work of 21 councils of national minorities.

In a meeting with Macedonian Diaspora Minister Edmond Ademi, he said that the 2004 agreement between Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro on the establishment and functioning of an international mixed commission on national minorities needs to be reac-

tivated, without looking back at the reasons for the earlier failure of the agreement.

"I think that this is a model, a mechanism that can, in any case, be even relieved of some of the daily political issues that always exist in the Balkans, to help address the interests of the two countries, their citizens and our minority policies. One of the valuable pieces of this very important mosaic is the National Council of the Macedonian National Minority which will, I am sure, also take part in what follows at the end of the year, and these are the elections for national councils of

national minorities," Ružić said.

Macedonian Minister for Diaspora, Edmond Ademi, said that he would ask his government about the formation of a mixed commission.

"We hope that, from the autumn, a mixed commission will be formed, which has only formally existed since 2004, but it has not functioned. Minister Ružić informed me about changes in the laws on the basis of which the national minority councils function. I hope that changes in these laws will improve transparency in the work of national minorities," Ademi said.

Paunović: We Invest a Lot of Effort and Energy in the Protection of Human Rights

Source: RTS

Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, said that a message was sent from the summit in Sofia that the EU was open to new members and that it would give them support in all areas, including the rule of law.

Suzana Paunović, in an interview to the RTS Prime Time News, said that almost half of the Sofia Declaration items refer to human rights, minority issues, bilateral and regional cooperation. She emphasized that it is important to show commitment to the implementation of the Declaration, and it is certain that Serbia will do so.

Regarding the Action Plans for Chapters 23 and 24, Paunović said that the revision of the Action Plan for Chapter 23 is currently underway and it will address the alignment of deadlines and activities with the EU transitional criteria.

She added that almost 83% of the Action Plan is realized or partially realized and that human rights are protected with the help of a whole set of specially designed activities. She pointed out that the whole human rights portfolio has been enhanced and that a special set of issues is devoted within the Action Plan to the position of



national minorities.

According to her, a lot of effort and energy is invested in the improvement of this area and she expressed hope that citizens feel it in everyday life, which is the ultimate goal.

Speaking about the amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities, Paunović said that they were aimed at three directions: to improve the legal status of national councils, to achieve greater transparency and efficiency in financing, and to ensure depoliticization of national.

She said that a wide public debate on the text of the Draft Law has been carried

out and that the dilemmas that the National Councils had on daily basis should be removed, particularly regarding the spending of funds in accordance with the law. The Director of the Human Rights Office said that this will be achieved with clear legal norms that will remove dilemmas about competencies and powers.

When it comes to the challenges in the protection of human rights, Paunović singled out the rights of women, the problem of domestic violence, the improvement of the position of persons with disabilities, the elderly, the children, the problem of peer violence ... She noted that finding solutions to these issues is the priority of the Government.

Languages and Scripts of National Minorities in the Parliament

According to the statement of the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV), MPs - members of national minorities will be able to use their mother tongue and script in addressing the Parliament in the near future.

Also, when a MP uses his or her language in the work of the Parliament permanently or in a particular case, the Secretary General of the National Assembly is obliged to provide simultaneous interpretation of his oral presentation or translation of the document he has submitted into the Serbian language.

This was preceded by the submission of

an amendment to Article 10 of the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities. As stated earlier in this article, it was envisaged that "a deputy, who is a member of a national minority whose number in the total population of the Republic of Serbia reaches two percent, has the right to address at the sessions of the National Assembly in his / her mother tongue." LSV MPs considered it "unacceptable that the legislator in this way discriminates against members of national minorities and restricts their rights. In this way, the legislator prevented the Slovaks, Croats, Ruthenians, Roma, Bulgarians, Romanians, Vlachs or Macedonians from addressing

the National Assembly in their mother tongue. "

LSV suggested extending the right to address MPs in their mother tongue to all those belonging to a national minority that has formed their national minority council.

MPs of the LSV pointed out that in this way, many national minorities will be fully affirmed, and not only those who have a greater share in the total population of the Republic of Serbia, and the promotion of multilingualism will be also present in the Republic National Assembly in addition to the Vojvodina Assembly.

Ambassador Radko Vlaykov Visits "Ivo Andrić" Elementary School in Belgrade

Source: Far

As a part of the Project "#EU-nasrpskom #EUinSerbian", Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria in Belgrade, H.E. Radko Vlaykov, visited the Primary School "Ivo Andrić" at Kanarevo Brdo on May 23. The visit was organized by IDR Agency, as part of the project that is implemented jointly with the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Belgrade.

"I am delighted, because I am greeted in the old Slavic way, with bread and salt," - Ambassador Vlaykov said, when he was greeted by three pupils in folk costumes in front of the school building.

Students of the sixth grade of the "Ivo Andrić" elementary school simulated the work of the Council of the European Union that the Republic of Bulgaria is currently presiding over. All delegates in the session presented themselves to Ambassador Vlayko in the language of the country they represented. They presented



ted the Ambassador Vlayko with the Danube Strategy and later unanimously adopted the document. Promotional films about the European Union, the Republic of Bulgaria, Cyril and Methodius, as well as on the interesting topics related to the EU and Bulgaria were also subsequently played.

"For me, as a father, there is nothing better than when I find myself in front of such an auditorium. I am glad you are nurturing European values. In seven years, when we will, hopefully, live in the same community, you will be 20 years old, and you will be the strength of this society that is just graduating from the faculty. You may think that this is now far from you, but, believe me, this time is closer than you suspect. That is why I am happy to see that you are dealing with things that exceed the curriculum"- Ambassador Vlaykov said to the pupils.

Schoolchildren asked a series of interesting questions. From the similarities and differences between the Serbs and Bulgarians, through the things most appealing to Ambassador Vlaykov in our country, sports and, of course, how to connect with the pupils in his country.

"I can talk about the similarities of the Serbs and Bulgarians for hours, and, when it comes to differences, which is an extremely difficult issue, I almost have nothing to say except few of very small things. We are connected by our faith, we are connected by our script, a Cyrillic script, and therefore we will celebrate the Day of Cyril and Methodius together. I will do everything in my power to connect you with a school from Bulgaria, to visit each other, exchange experiences, build friendships, and I hope that you will soon be my guests in the residence," - Ambassador Radko Vlaykov said, thanking six-graders of the "Ivo Andrić" elementary school for a great organization.

Gifts were also exchanged. The children prepared their best works of art for the Ambassador, while the Ambassador handed out to each participant a special gift from the Embassy of Bulgaria.

Ambassador Vlaykov and Director of the Ivo Andrić Elementary School, Milan Pašić, PhD, have planted the Bulgarian Rose in the Park of Friendship as a symbol that will connect them in the future. A special surprise for the ambassador was a visit to the shooting range ground, where the Serbian Olympic Team also trains.



Rights of Minorities Are Not in the Focus of the Authorities in Serbia

Source: Media Center

The Government in Serbia believes that resolving the status of Kosovo will end the process of EU integration, and therefore no attention is paid to other important issues, such as the position of national minorities, it was assessed during the presentation of the Alternative Report on the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities in the Republic of Serbia, held on May 30.

"Our only recommendation to the state leadership is to finally start doing their work when it comes to national minorities," the founder of the Forum for Ethnic Relations, Dušan Janjić, said. He added that the Action Plan for the Improvement of the Position of National Minorities cannot be defined based on the demands of the member states of the European Union, but based on the needs of the people living here.

Janjić believes that the difficult position of minorities in Serbia is caused by poor constitutional laws and the work of the Constitutional Court, which, according to him, from time to time issues unconstitutional decisions.

Former Provincial Ombudsman in charge of national minority rights, Eva Vukašinović, also pointed out that the constitutional framework and the laws were not synchronized, and that Serbia needed a new Action Plan that

for adopting the laws stipulated by the Action Plan have expired, and that the implementation of the existing laws is very poor.

"It is not true that all activities have been completed. In many places, whe-



would focus on the improvement of the position of minorities.

"The registration of the names of members of national minorities in personal documents is not a collective, but a personal right. We have not noticed measures that would improve the work of judges in minority languages. So, for example, we have a case

re provided, there is still no place for minority languages that are in official use," Eva Vukašinović explained, concluding that it is not necessary to change the awareness of people who are part of a minority group, but the thinking of all citizens.

Economist Danilo Šuković believes that the economic rights of national minorities are neglected, stating that this is a question in the focus of all multicultural environments, as this avoids discrimination in employment.

"It is therefore very important to set new criteria for employment. These criteria should also apply to members of minority groups in order to facilitate their employment. Unlike private, where it depends, first and foremost, on the employer's will, the state sector can and must work on greater representation of national minorities. If you do not have results in this segment, then we can not talk about democracy, freedom and justice. And that is why this is a very important issue," Šuković concluded, adding that Serbia has lagged behind for decades in relation to other countries when it comes to this issue.



"Serbia needs constitutional changes. If people from the Serbian Government continue to follow the opinion of the Constitutional Court, they will end up like this Court. No one will know they exist," he said.

in Vojvodina, where the trial takes place in the Hungarian language, while the records and verdict are almost always delivered in Serbian," Vukašinović warned, saying that all the deadlines

Yugoslavs Are Disappearing, There Are Fewer and Fewer Vlachs

Source: Politika

Judging by the number of group members on social networks bearing Yugo-nostalgic names, such as "The Good Old Times", "The Eighties Were the Years" and "Yugoslavia - Our Only State", more than one hundred thousand people with nostalgia remembered growing up in a country spreading from the Vardar River to the Triglav Mountain. However, the latest census shows that only 23,303 Yugoslavs live in Serbia - even 57,418 less than in 2002. The largest number of Yugoslavs was registered in the 1981 population census, and, in the last census in 2002, "Jugovics" were the fourth largest national minority in Serbia.

However, the Yugoslavs are not the only national minority that is disappearing. A research by Dr. Aleksandar Knežević, assistant professor at the Faculty of Geography in Belgrade, showed that Bosniaks were the only national minority whose number increased between two censuses. Namely, the 2011 census showed that Bosnians were about 8,000 more than in 2002.

- Demographic indicators are implausible: all national minorities in Serbia record decline in their birth rate. Even Roma and Albanian women entered this demographic transition. Roma women still bear more children than Serbian women, but far less than their mothers and grandmothers. The largest national minority in Serbia is the Hungarian national minority, but the number of Hungarians is also declining due to negative natural growth. There are 40,000 less Hungarians than in the previous census. It is interesting that Hungarians in Serbia have fewer children than their compatriots who live in Hungary. It should be recalled that the negative natural increase began in 1989 in Vojvodina, and three years later in central Serbia

- Dr. Aleksandar Knežević reminds and adds that the Vlachs, Hungarians, Slovenians, Germans and Jews are ethnic minorities with the lowest natural increase rate.

The last census showed that national minorities accounted for 12% of the population of Serbia, and after Hungarians, the most numerous national minority is Roma (147,604), Bosniaks (145,278), Croats (57,900) and Slovaks (52,750). Also, it should be borne in mind that Bosniaks were introduced into the classification of the census in 2002 and that a number of members of the Islamic religion today are being declared Bosniaks and the others as Muslims. In interpreting the census data, the fact that the Ukrainians were shown separately from the Ruthenians since 1971, Bunjevacs and Šokci were shown separately from the Croats since 1991, while the introduction of the Egyptians and Ashkali also influenced the number of declared Roma, or Albanians.

The mother tongue is a much stronger and more objective indicator of ethnic affiliation than a declaration of ethnic affiliation: at the 1961 census, only 1,368 persons declared themselves as Vlachs, while as many as 106,656 said that the Vlach language is their mother tongue.

- National affiliation in demographic statistics is a complex and relative issue. Our statistics do not operate on the notion of legal ethnicity, but records the so-called subjective experience of national affiliation. This, in translation, means that someone who is a Serb, a Croat, or a Muslim can declare themselves as a Yugoslav, because this is his subjective experience of nationality. It has been established that the Roma and Vlachs belong to the so-called floating ethnic groups. These are the communities whose members often change attitudes about ethnic origin when declaring

census and vital statistics. Namely, Roma sometimes declare themselves as Serbs, and sometimes as Roma, while the Vlachs sometimes declare themselves as Romanians - our interlocutor notes.

Dr Knežević points out that mother tongue is a much stronger and more objective indicator of ethnic affiliation than a declaration of ethnic affiliation. As a result, many countries of Western Europe do not ask for nationality in the census, but for one's mother tongue and use language. Although it has the longest tradition of censuses in Europe, France has not been collecting data on religion and nation for 150 years and does not deal with the ethnic categorization of the population, while the question of the country of birth is raised in the censuses in the function of the integration policy of immigrants. The Macedonians have recently dropped the issue of national affiliation from the population census, and the European Statistical Bureau's recommendation is not to raise the issue of ethnicity in the census.

- An illustrative evidence that the mother tongue is a true indicator of ethnicity are the Vlachs. For example, during the population census in 1961, only 1,383 persons declared themselves as Vlachs, while as many as 106,656 said that the Vlach language was their mother tongue. The Vlachs are among the first ethnic groups that entered the process of demographic depopulation, because they have observed the one-child policy for decades. In the 1960s, the Vlachs began moving to Western Europe, and the Vlach villages in eastern Serbia are almost empty. Romanization of the Vlachs was initiated by the Romanian Academician Georgi Valsan in the time of Jovan Cvijić, and this trend still goes on - Dr Aleksandar Knežević concludes.

"The Home Guardian" Started from Bačko Petrovo Selo

Source: Foundation 021

The first festival "The Home Guardian" was held in Bačko Petrovo Selo on May 26th, under the motto "We live with each other and not one beside other".

The event began in the premises of the Local Community, where an exhibition of paintings was opened.

The theme that connects works created in the art colony is Vojvodina's multiculturalism. Photos of Djordje Kovačev, Djordje Beara, Marta Kis Buterer, Pavel Pop, Gergi Achaji, Daniele Morariu and Dominic Morariu were displayed.

The exhibition was opened by the poet and journalist Janos Zolnay, saying that "Vojvodina, in the best possible way, proves everyday that understanding, multilingualism and unity of people is a trademark of this part of the earth's globe."

"The culture of Vojvodina is a great wealth of people living in this part of the world and a treasure that is more luxurious than words can say. I carry Vojvodina in my heart, I like it "from mud and despite all odds" as Mika Antić would once say, as well as those good hearted people with a beautiful soul. We must preserve this," Zolnay said.

In the program held at the Archery, the hosts presented themselves through play, homemade crafts, and traditional cuisine. Visitors could enjoy in the performances of cultural and artistic societies and reciters and in exhibited handmade work, as well as in the tasting of local culinary specialties.

The wealth of folk games and songs was presented by the cultural and artistic societies "Đido" and "Petefi Sandor" from Bečej, "Branko T. Radičević" from Radičević, "Lole" and "Dr Kiš Imre" from Bačko Petrovo Selo, "Đeram" from Bačko Gra-



dište, as well as "Romano Ternipe" from Novi Sad.

Among the participants there was an association of amateur painters "Da Vinci" from Bački Petrovac. It was founded 11 years ago and has thirty members, who are engaged in painting, sculpture and handicrafts.

"We are all amateurs and we help each other. We participated in more than 80 exhibitions throughout Vojvodina and we cooperate well with ama-

teur artists from other towns in Vojvodina. We also work with children and we currently have five or six of them, who are very talented," Ana Maria Stanojev, a representative of this association, said.

In the coming months, another 11 Vojvodina cities will be presented and connected through "The Home Guardian", and the final event will be organized in Novi Sad.

The project is financially supported by the European Union, and is implemented by the Foundation 021 with the support of non-governmental organizations CESER from Ruma, Center for Civil Society Development from Zrenjanin and KUD Branko T. Radičević from Radičević.



Getting to Know Each Other Through a Multi-Lingual Quiz

Source: Dnevnik

Photo: Dnevnik/"Branko Radičević" Grammar School

As a part of the project of the Provincial Government "Affirmation of Multiculturalism and Tolerance in Vojvodina" Kanjiža, Kovačica and Sombor hosted the regional quizzes for secondary school students "How Much Do We Know Each Other?" from the 12th Cycle.

The organizer and implementer of the project is the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities - National Communities of AP Vojvodina.

Independent adviser in the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities - National Communities of AP Vojvodina, Bojan Gregurić, emphasizes that in, addition to multilingualism, as the high school students quiz is held in Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak and Romanian, the special quality of this year's competition is that the teams are formed from pupils of different schools ahead of competi-



tion, which directly affects the connection and better acquaintance of young people.

The ethnically mixed nature of teams is the main feature of this quiz season. Practically all teams are made up of students from three different schools and as such they represent their school and their environment, and the participants get acquainted with each other as they compete.

The final competition, held in the "Danube" Studio in Novi Sad, gathered the best competitors from nine high schools in Vojvodina and secondary vocational schools from Kikinda, Senta, Bačka Palanka, Novi Sad, Kovin, Bela Crkva and Stara Pazova. The most successful team consisted of Igor Miroslavljević, a student of the "Branko Radičević" Gymnasium in Stara Pazova, Katarina Jovanović, a student of the Gymnasium and the Economic School from Bela Crkva and Emilija Dotlić, a student of the Gymnasium and Economic School "Branko Radičević" from Kovin. Mihalj Njilaš, Deputy Prime Minister of the Provincial Government and Provincial Secretary for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities - National Communities, presented them with the prizes.

81 competitors from 27 secondary schools from Vojvodina participated in the 12th Cycle of the quiz.

Slovak Community

Serbian-Slovak Poetry Kolo in Kulpin

Source: Provincial Government

Photo: Hlas Ijudu

Deputy Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities, Dr Nebojša Kuzmanović, attended the meeting of Slovak and Serbian poets in the Dunderški Castle, in Kulpin, organized by the Slovak Cultural Club of Serbia from Bački Petrovac, entitled "Serbian-Slovak Poetry Kolo". The meeting was organized on May 31st.



"The eternal friendship of the Slovak and Serbian peoples and this poetry

gathering gets its confirmation, because, in this historic town back in

1869, a great Slovak poet and founder of the Slovak Heritage, William Paulini Tot, was jointly elected by Slovaks and Serbs in the Kulpinski elections as a deputy in the Hungarian Parliament," Dr. Kuzmanović said, adding that this was the message of good cooperation and building a better life.

In his words, the Provincial Secretariat for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities

gives strong support to fostering culture and informing the Slovak national community in Vojvodina in order to protect and preserve the constitutionally guaranteed rights to all national minorities in this area.

On the other hand, Kuzmanović reminded, the Republic of Slovakia is concerned about fostering good re-

lations with our country, and this fellowship of poets is another contribution to these relations.

In front of the Slovak Cultural Club poets and fans of poetry were greeted by the president of the club, Vladimir Valenčik, and their verses were read by the Slovak poets Miroslav Bijelik, the president of the Associa-

tion of Slovak Writers, Miroslav Demak and others, while the Serbian poets Radomir Andrić, the president of the Association of Serbian Writers, Miodrag Jakšić and others presented the Serbian poetry scene by verses and prose.

In the artistic part of the program, violinist Marina Cerovska performed.

"Folklorika" Television Festively Opened

Source: Provincial Government

On June 7, Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities, Dragana Milošević, attended the opening ceremony of the "Folklorika" TV channel for the Slovak national minority in Serbia on June 7 at the Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Slovaks in Novi Sad.

By cutting the ribbon, the "Folklorika" TV was symbolically opened by the Secretary General of the President of the Republic of Serbia, Nikola Selaković, who congratulated on this project, which, as he said, brings closer the Serbian and Slovak people, whose roots of friendship are deep in history.

The premier broadcasting of several segments of the program of the new private Slovak television "Folklorika" started its official broadcasting in order to bring the life of Vojvodina's Slovaks and the Slovak motherland closer to everyone.

Dragana Milošević stated that this is an extraordinary day for the Slovak national community in Vojvodina, because, in this way, they will be connected to their home country every day.

"As the Provincial Secretary in charge of this portfolio, I have to emphasize that the Provincial Government addresses the preservation of the national identity of each national community in Vojvodina with special care. I would especially like to emphasize that in the coming period, the budget for a stronger media support of national communities will increase five times, which will also strengthen their program content," Dragana Milošević said.

On behalf of the President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, the opening of the new TV channel was greeted by the Secretary General of the President, Nikola Selaković, who congratulated on this project, which, as he said, brings closer the Serbian and Slovak people, whose roots of friendship are deep in history.

"I will remind that this year Serbia ce-

lebrates 100 years since the end of the First World War, when the Slovak people gained freedom and stood by the Serbs, with whom together they made the decision to join the Kingdom of Serbia. In addition, today is a special day for the Institute of Culture of Vojvodina Slovaks, because they celebrate ten years since the foundation, and I especially congratulate them and wish them success in their further work," Selaković said. He added that this is only a confirmation that the Republic of Serbia especially nourishes, respects and appreciates the Slovak national community, and the right to care for

the language, script, culture and customs in our country is guaranteed by the Constitution to Slovak and all other national minorities. The television "Folklorika" will verify it by its future work.

Congratulating on the opening of the television, which will deepen, strengthen and connect more profoundly relations of our two nations, President of the Assembly of Slovakia, Andrej



lebrates 100 years since the end of the First World War, when the Slovak people gained freedom and stood by the Serbs, with whom together they made the decision to join the Kingdom of Serbia. In addition, today is a special day for the Institute of Culture of Vojvodina Slovaks, because they celebrate ten years since the foundation, and I especially congratulate them and wish them success in their further work," Selaković said. He added that this is only a confirmation that the Republic of Serbia especially nourishes, respects and appreciates the Slovak national community, and the right to care for

Danko, stressed that the centuries of the common life of the Slovaks and Serbs in this area represent a sufficient precondition for continuing with such a life.

Marcel Dekanovski explained that the goal of opening this TV station, in addition to bringing the lives of Slovaks to Vojvodina and Slovakia closer, is to bring the much larger picture on Belgrade - Bratislava relations.

The opening ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic in Serbia, Dagmar Repchekova.

Bošnjak: Good Administration at the Local Level for Roma Men and Women

Source: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government

The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government completes the legal framework in order to involve further members of minorities, and especially Roma men and women, into social processes," State Secretary Ivan Bošnjak said at the presentation of the joint program of the Council of Europe and the European Commission ROMACTED "Promoting Good Governance and Empowering the Roma Community at the local level".

Bošnjak thanked international partners for supporting the empowerment of the Roma community and said that the already good laws were being improved in order to overcome the shortcomings that were demonstrated in their implementation.

"It is the next task that is set before us all to further the decentralization of jobs and re-



sponsibilities. Life is happening at the local level and the main challenge is to solve the problems in the simplest way where they are generated in local environments," the State Secretary said.

He reminded that, in the second half of the year, elections for national councils of national minorities will be held, and invited those present to contribute to ensuring that as many of our citizens, members of national minorities, participate in this process.

The ROMACTED program aimed at building political will and sustainable policies through the involvement of local authorities included 11 local self-governments, and the ceremony at which the project was presented was also attended by Tim Cartwright, Head of Mission of the Council of Europe, Zorana Mihajlović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of Serbia, and President of the National Council of the Roma National Minority, Tefik Ramadano-
vić.

Step by Step to the Mobile Teams' Operational Plan

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights

Uhe project "Technical Assistance for Improving the Living and Housing Conditions of the Roma Population in Informal Settlements – ROMA HOUSING" (IPA 2013) supported by the European Union in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, the Sector for Contracting and Financing Programs from EU Funds, implemented by the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure and the Office for Human and Minority Rights, under Component 2 - Social Inclusion Measures, provides intensive support to the process of establishing mobile teams, continuously strengthening their capacities for planning and implementing programs and services that will contribute to the social inclusion of the Roma population at the local community level.

In this regard, during the courses in May and June 2018, the second cycle of training is being realized, which aims to familiarize stakeholders with the methodology of operational planning and support for 20 formed mobile teams during the process of development of operational plans for the period June - December 2018. A total of 20 trainings are realized in each of

the local self-government units involved in the project (Aleksinac, Bačka Palanka, Beočin, Bor, Čukarica, Vlasotince, Vladičin Han, Zaječar, Zrenjanin, Kraljevo, Kovačica, Lajkovac, Paraćin, Požarevac, Pećinci, Ruma, Subotica, Stara Pazova, Nis and Sabac).

In the past few days, representatives of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, together with the team of mentors, attended trainings in Subotica, Zrenjanin and Čukarica. In addition to the members of the mobile teams (Roma co-ordinators, pedagogical assistants, health mediators, CSW social workers and National Employment Service counselors), these workshops / trainings were also attended by representatives of other institutions and organizations that directly or indirectly can contribute to improvement of living and housing conditions of the Roma population living in sub-standard settlements.

The aim of the training is that activities and measures are planned in order to respond to the priority needs of the Roma population, which will contribute to greater involvement in the education system, improving health

and adopting healthy lifestyles, increasing employability and employment / self-employment of the Roma population, greater coverage of services and measures of social protection, as well as the improvement of housing conditions in which Roma men and women live.

The process of six-month operational planning, its implementation and monitoring will strengthen the capacities of mobile teams to establish the continuity of operational planning on annual level, which will, in addition to defining the objectives and activities of the carrier and partner, the timeframe, existing resources, indicators and sources of verification, also defined the necessary resources for the realization of the envisaged activities, as well as the sources of financing.

Operational plans of mobile teams contribute to the implementation of local action plans for the improvement of the position of Roma, as well as the priorities and measures defined by the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025.

Festival "Kalina" Organized for the Fifteenth Time

Photo: KPD Carpathians

On June 9-10, the 15th Ukrainian Culture Festival "Kalina" was held. This year's festival took place in the Cultural Center "Kula" in Kula.

The Festival began with the presentation "The First Exit" by Stepan Vasiljčenko, and with the performance of the Cultural and Educational Society "Karpati" from Vrbas. It was officially opened on Sunday, with a concert of the Ukrainian folk songs, and the visitors also had the opportunity to see the exhibition of photographs and to enjoy in the presentation of Ukrainian cuisine.

The festival also featured UKC "Kobzar" from Novi Sad, KUD "Ivan Senjuk"



from Kula, DNUK "Kolomejka" from Sremska Mitrovica and UKU "Kalina" from Indjija, and cultural societies from Ukraine, Croatia and Republika Srpska came from abroad to support the festival.

Specific for this festival is that it is held in five cities alternately, where a large number of Ukrainians live. The importance of the festival is also reflected in the fact that all cultural societies that cherish Ukrainian culture in the Republic of Serbia participate in it and, during festival days, present the audience with choreographies and songs that they prepared during previous twelve months.

This year the festival was supported by the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia, and the organizer and sponsor was the National Council of the Ukrainian National Minority in Serbia.

Ruthenian Community

The Carpathian Festival of Ruthenian Culture Connects Svidnik and Vrbas

Source: Dnevnik

Representatives of the local self-government led by the President of the Municipality of Vrbas, Milan Glušac, visited the brotherly town of Svidnik, Slovakia, and the Festival of Ruthenian Culture, which was also attended by the Carpathian Cultural and Educational Society from Vrbas.

Visit to Slovakia was an opportunity to mark the tenth anniversary of the establishment of brotherly relations between Svidnik and Vrbas and look into possible models of cooperation. On the occasion of the successful ten-year cooperation with the town of Svidnik, Glušac received a plaque on behalf of the Municipality of Vrbas.

Among the delegates attending the Ruthenian Culture Festival were representatives of cities from Russia, Macedonia, Ukraine, Poland and other countries.

- Cooperation in the field of culture is



developing from year to year, we regularly exchange visits of cultural societies that perform in both towns, which contributes to the familiarization and closeness of our cultural heritage, and we have agreed to improve this further," Vrbas Mayor, Milan Glušac, said upon return from Slovakia. To start with, both sides will organize visits of Vrbas artists

to Svidnik, to enable the artists from both towns to create together in art colonies. The plan is to extend cooperation to other areas, as well. Svidnik is a town in the European Union and it is important for us to have a reliable partner for projects for which EU funds can be requested - Vrbas's first man, Milan Glušac, said.

"Gyöngyösbokréta" and "Durindo" Festivals Preserve the Identity of the Hungarians

Source: Dnevnik

The most important festivals of the creativity of Vojvodina's Hungarians, original folklore, folk music orchestras, choirs and soloists, the 55th festival "Gyöngyösbokréta" Festival and 42nd "Durindo" Festival were held last weekend in Novi Kneževac.

Festival flags were blessed by Bishop Janoš Šoti, and about 2,400 participants in the two days of the festival weekend paraded down the central street of the town before the performance.

On behalf of the host, the participants were greeted by the President of the Municipality and the President of the Municipal Assembly of Novi Kneževac, Dr. Radovan Uverić and Nandor Ujheli, and the importance of the festivals was also emphasized by the President of the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority in Serbia, Jene Hajnal,



Chairman of the Organizing Committee, Arpad Kišimre, State Secretary in charge of national policy in the Hungarian government, Arpad Janos Potapi.

The host of this festivity for cultivating the traditions of folk creativity was the Cultural Artistic Society "Tisadjendje", and it was the first time it was held in this northern Banat town. The president of the KUD "Tisadjendje", Magdalena

Kovač, said that they had been preparing for a year and that they were proud because, on Saturday, at the "Gyöngyösbokréta" Festival stage in the park there were 35 folklore ensembles with around 900 participants, while, on Sunday, 119 choirs, musical ensembles and soloists with 1,450 performers presented themselves at the Durindo Festival in the halls of "Branislav Nušić" Theatre and Library. A large number of activists from all parts of the Novi Kneževac municipality did their best to ensure a successful organization of the event.

According to the decision of the expert jury, this year's winner of the "Aniko Bodor" award is the male choir "Botra" of the Bečej Cultural Society "Sandor Petefi". At the end of the festival, the flag of the "Gyöngyösbokréta" and "Durindo" festivals was taken over by KUD "Bela Bartok" from Horgoš, which will host the event next year.

Donors Delegation Visited the Kindergarten in Jermenovci

Source: South Banat

Municipality of Plandište received funds for renovation and equipping the kindergarten in Jermenovci in the amount of 2.555,672.89 dinars. Funds were provided on the basis of the Agreement on the Allocation of Funds signed between the Bethlehem Gabor Fund from Budapest, the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority from Subotica and the Municipality of Plandište.

Representatives of the donors wanted to check the quality of the works, before the official reception of the building. Donors were welcomed by the Mayor of Plandište, Jovan Repac, and the Deputy Mayor of Plandište, Goran Donevski, in Jermenovac.

Grants were obtained in order to implement the "Program for Improve-

ment of Preschool Institutions in the Carpathian Basin".

The project envisages replacement of the entire roof, installation of thermal insulation, reconstruction of the cei-



ling, installation of new gutters, replacement of windows, sanitary facilities and wall tiles. New tables and chairs are provided, mattresses adapted to the age of kindergarten children. Thanks to this project, the kindergarten will also receive video surveillance, air conditioning and a new TV.

During June, thanks to the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority, a new playground worth 800,000 dinars will be installed in the yard of the kindergarten.

The president of the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority, Jene Hajnal, said that he was pleased with the work done, but that it is most important that the beneficiaries, that is, children and employees in the kindergarten, are satisfied with the renovated kindergarten.

- In my opinion, the works were done very well, the aesthetic looks very nice, now we are waiting only for the Inspector's decision regarding the technical issues and the commissioning of the kindergarten. The Municipality of Plandište owes great gratitude to the National Council and the Republic of Hungary for a non-refundable donation, Mayor Jovan Repac said.

Bosnian, Because We Are Bosniaks

Source: BNV

A regular press conference was held in the Bosniak National Council on June 4, during which the President of the Council, dr. Sulejman Ugljanin addressed the public.

Speaking about the process of enrolling children in school and their parents' opting for lectures in the Bosnian language, President Ugljanin invited parents to choose the education of children in Bosnian mother tongue and script.

"In the capacity of the President of the Bosniak National Council, I invite all parents to exercise their legal right and declare that their children can use their rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the Law arising from



that declaration," - President Ugljanin emphasized.

To this end, the Bosniak National Council launched a campaign entitled "Bosnian, Since We Are Bosniaks", which aims to inform fully all Bo-

sniaks about the education of children in their mother tongue.

President Ugljanin urged all Bosniaks to enroll in the Special Voters List for the elections for the Bosniak National Council, which will give them the opportunity to use all their rights deriving from the Constitution and the Law.

Also, the visit of Ambassador Sem Fabrizi, Head of the European Union Delegation to Belgrade to the Bosniak National Council, was announced for the end of this month, and described as an opportunity for the EU Delegation to learn about all the outstanding issues that Bosniaks have in this country.

Bosniaks in Serbia Mark Ramadan Bayram

Source: BNV

On June 15, the Bosniak National Council organized a traditional Bayram reception to mark the Ramadan Bayram for all residents of Sandzak.

Prizes were awarded to students who won the first, second and third places at the Republican Contest of the Bosnian Language and Language Culture.

The President of the Bosniak National Council congratulated Bayram to the attendees, emphasized the importance of highlighting the success of young Bosniaks, and called for unity of all Sandzak residents.

"Congratulations to the pupils of elementary schools for their success, they are our pride, congratulations to their parents who educate them properly, teachers and lecturers who teach them and treat them as their own children, and headmasters who support teaching in the mother tongue and who have enabled them to use their rights as provided by the Constitution and the Law. I take the opportunity, in my capacity as the



president and founder of the Bosniak National Council, to call for unity all those who carry the Sandzak regional and Bosniak national identity, whatever religion, nation, or party they belong to. We are the only ones who can solve the status of Sandzak, because Sandzak belongs to us, and the resolution of the Sandzak is-

sue is the key to peace in the Balkans. "

Thirty pupils were awarded with the Prizes of the Bosniak National Council, 15 of whom took the third, 10 the second and 5 the first places at the Republican Contest. A cocktail was also organized for the guests who exchanged Bayram greetings.

Czech Community at an International Seminar in Romania

Source: Škola Plus Bela Crkva

Representatives of Škola Plus from Bela Crkva, as well as the National Council of the Czech National Minority in Serbia, attended an international seminar organized by the Karas Severin Region Didactic House in Romania at the end of May 2018.

A seminar titled "The European Dimension of Multiethnic and Multicultural Banat" was held in Karasova near Rešica in the premises of the Croatian Community in Romania. The organizer of the seminar, Nikoleta Marku, director of the Didactic House of the Karas Severin Region in Romania, devised the seminar as a series of intercultural events and presentations with the aim of presenting the audience with the beauty and richness of the diversity of Banat from the Romanian and Serbian sides.



The seminar was also attended by the President of the Culture Committee of the National Council of the Czech Republic in Serbia, Ljiljana Stehlik. In her opening presentation, Ms. Stehlik had the opportunity to present the life of Czechs in the territory of Serbia, especially in the area of the Serbian Banat, to the audience. The representatives of a large number of ethnic communities who attended the seminar were in-

terested in the customs of the Czechs in our part of Banat. This was also an opportunity to highlight the importance of cultivating good relations with all national communities in the environment.

The International Seminar "The European Dimension of Multiethnic and Multicultural Banat" aimed at cross-border exchange of experiences in the regions of Serbian and Romanian Banat. During the seminar, the traditional cultures of Croats, Serbs, Ukrainians, Czechs, Roma, Germans, Hungarians and Romanians who live together in the Romanian Banat were shown.

The working part of the seminar was extremely useful from the point of view of new ideas and experiences related to the promotion of traditional culture, as well as the necessity of cross-border cooperation.

Bunjevac Community

Conference "Oral Folk Treasures, Customs and Traditions of Bačka Bunjevacs" Organized

Source: Bunjevac Media Center

The Sixth Panel Conference "Oral Folk Treasures, Customs and Traditions of Bačka Bunjevacs" organized by KUD "Bunjevka" from Subotica, was held on May 25, 2018, in the cinema hall of the "Aleksandar Lifka" Art Cinema in Subotica.

At the very beginning of the program, the President of the Cultural Artistic Society "Bunjevka", Kata Kuntić, addressed the participants and emphasized the importance of holding this sixth Panel Conference, after which the coordinator of this project, Tamara Babić, took the floor and presented the Collected Works from the Fifth Panel Conference in 2017 and the catalogue with the program of this year's Panel Conference.



The topics addressed within this Panel Conference on the subject of the non-material cultural heritage include:

- "Maid's Dowry", lecturer Kata Kuntić - KUD "Bunjevka" - protector of the non-material element;

- "Queen of the Dove", lecturer Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić PhD - KUD "Bunjevka" - protector of the non-material element;

- "Guardians of the Bunjevac Musical Tradition" - lecturer Tamara Babić - UG "Bunjevačka kasina" - protector of the non-material element;

- "Dužijanca of the Bačka Bunjevacs" - lecturers Kata Kuntić and Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić, PhD - Center for Bunjevac Culture – protectors;

All of the above topics were accompanied by footage and video presentations, with detailed explanations confirming that all of these elements are still alive and that there is continuity in this tradition, which can serve as the basis for their protection as non-material elements of the Bunjevac cultural heritage.

140th Anniversary of the Birth of Rev. Blaško Rajić Marked

On the occasion of the 140th anniversary of the birth of Rev. Blaško Rajić, a historical lecture "Blaško Rajić and His Fight for the Bunjevac Identity" was organized by UG "Bunjevac Casina" in the branch of the public library in Palić on May 30.

The lecturer at the event was a researcher of the Bunjevac history, Mijo Mandić, and the opening speech was delivered by Dragan Rokvić, Director of the City Library in Subotica.

In addition to the historical lecture, a documentary about Blaško Rajić, produced by BKC Bajmok, was also shown.

Stela Bukvić read excerpts from Rajić's speech and passages from the epic "Glory".

The topic discussed at the lecture was the mission of Rev. Blaško Rajić in Paris in 1918 and his role as a representative of the Bunjevac people at the Great National Assembly in Novi Sad on November 25, 1918.



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of the European Union



The issuance of the newsletter is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.
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