

**As a State, We
Nourish the Unity
of Diversity**

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september 2018



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HIGHLIGHTS



Government Committed to Improving the Status of Minority Rights

On September 6, the Director of the Government Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, met with the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, Lamberto Zannier, and she informed him about the implementation of the activities of the Action Plan for the Realization of the Rights of National Minorities.



Sombor Hosts "Europe in My City" Conference

On September 20, Sombor hosted the "Europe in My City" conference on protection and exercise of human and minority rights. The conference was organized by the German Foundation "Konrad Adenauer", in cooperation with the City of Sombor and the German Association "Gerhard" Sombor.



Certificates Awarded to Participants in the Summer School "We and the Others. Overcoming the Borders"

Participants in the Summer School of Interethnic, Intercultural and Inter-Confessional Dialogue (AID), held at Srebrno Jezero, were awarded diplomas for successful completion of activities in a week-long seminar held from August 26 to September 1 under the title "We and the Others. Overcoming the Borders."



Promotion of the Book "Stories from Diaspora and Homeland Countries"

The book "Stories from Diaspora and Homeland Countries" by Admir Lisica was promoted in the Bosniak National Council on September 15.

The book is about people who began their journey to Diaspora after the end of the Second World War, but also about successful Bosniaks from the homeland countries in the region.

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(Not) the choice?

There is a bit more than a month left until the elections for members of national councils of national minorities. The members of the 22 national minorities will be exercising their right to elect their representatives. The first precondition for voting is to enrol in the Special Voters' List for National Minorities. According to the website of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, the conclusion of the Special Voter List will be done 15 days before the elections, on October 19. Whether the call of the Ministry of Public Administration and other government bodies to the members of the national minorities to register in the Special Voters' List will bear fruit will be clear after this date, because, with the exception of the few national councils that actively propagate the importance of voters' registration and elections, others have not yet included it in the agenda.

By October 19, all those who aim to be in one of the national councils can submit their lists. By the conclusion of this issue, the Republic Electoral Commission approved 20 electoral lists of 11 national minorities. It is difficult to forecast how many lists will be registered, but, on the basis of the approved ones, it is evident that there are deep divisions in some national communities. For instance, the Ruthenian community, which, although being a less numerous community (according to the last census, 14,246 citizens declared as members of this community) already has 4 electoral lists, while in the previous elections in 2014 they had a total of 7 lists. The reasons behind this division are, of course, dissatisfaction with the existing situation in the community, desires and plans for its improvement, or something else. On the other hand, a more numerous community - the Slovak community - has, for the time being, only two lists registered. Those who believe that factions within a community are detrimental for the overall interests of the community as a whole would say that this is a good sign, but, what is interesting about these lists is that they both come from the same political party, i.e., the leading candidates on the lists are members of the same dominant political party. Will these and similar situations make the voters' decisions easier or more complicated?

30 different national minorities live in Serbia



and ONE newsletter for all

This Is the Year of National Minorities

Following the ratification of a set of laws regulating the national minority policy in the Republic of Serbia, regular elections for members of national councils of national minorities will take place on November 4. Some communities have already started their campaigns, and the Republic Electoral Commission has started ratification of lists of candidates. We talked to the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government Branko Ružić about the activities that preceded the slating of the elections and about what remains to be done in the coming period.

The period since your appointment as Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government has been marked by a major commitment to improving the overall minority policy in the Republic of Serbia, including the adoption of amendments to two principal laws regulating national minority rights. In August you slated the elections for national councils of national minorities' for November 4. What kind of activities will the Ministry implement in this period in preparation for the elections?

This is the year of national minorities, as we like to say in the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government, not only because of the set of laws adopted in the Assembly in June, which significantly improve the conditions for exercising the rights of minorities, but also because of the elections for national councils of national minorities.

We, at the Ministry, as well as other institutions and bodies involved in this process – the Republic Electoral Commission, local self-governments, national minority councils, are fully prepared for the coming elections. The role of the Ministry in conducting elections for members of national councils of national minorities relates to checking electoral lists and confirming electoral applications.

The Ministry concludes the Special Voter List 15 days before the Election Day. During this period, the Ministry makes entries and changes in the list, while requests for registration and changes of data are submitted to the municipality in which they are located. In addition, there are other administrative jobs to make sure that things function properly.



ly.

We have provided all the preconditions for conducting these elections, organized a campaign to inform our citizens, members of national minorities, to have the right to vote and to be elected, with the aim of getting these bodies consist of representatives who will best promote their interests in the field of education, culture, information, official use of language and script.

In your opinion, what are the most important activities that should be carried out by national minority councils?

Representatives of the national minority councils should undertake all measures to inform and encourage their compatriots to register in the Special Voters' List and thereby gain the right to elect, to be elected as a member of the national minority council, and to nominate candidates for members of the national minority council.

The precondition for exercising the

right to vote in national minorities' national council elections is to register in the Special Voters' List, which is in progress. The number of registered voters will determine the method of electing representatives in national councils of national minorities. How long can minority members register in this List?

The Ministry concludes the Special Voters' List 15 days before the Election Day. Citizens can be entered or deleted from the Special Voters' List after the conclusion. Requests shall be filed in municipalities and cities according to the place of residence or temporary residence for internally displaced persons. It is important that our fellow citizens know that they can be registered in the Special Voters' List exclusively on a personal request. The Special Voters' List shall be concluded 72 hours prior to the Election Day, when the Ministry shall communicate to the Republic Electoral Commission all decisions on entries, deletions, amendments and cor-

rections in the Special Voters' List adopted since the conclusion of the voter register.

It has been mentioned in the media on several occasions that the new application for the Special Voter List will contribute to a more transparent and efficient elections process. Can you explain to us what kind of changes the new application has made in the registration process?

Citizens' data needed for the Special Voters' List are taken from the Unified Voters' List. And this is what digitalization brought us. This process was not automatic in the past, so if a person who had registered in the Special Voters' List changed their place of residence, there was no possibility for this change to be automatically entered in the Special Voters' List, and this individual had to file a request for deletion in the municipality / city where the data had been originally entered, and then apply for a new registration in the municipality / city where they re-

located. A new application through the Unified Voters' List check enabled this change to be made automatically.

According to our knowledge, in some national minorities, functionaries, or presidents of certain political parties, transfer their functions to their relatives in order to be able to run in the elections. Can such a procedure be regarded as a violation of the Law on NMCs? What are the sanctions envisaged by the Law in such cases?

Political party officials can run in elections (to be elected as members of a national council), however, the Law stipulates that the president of the national council and a member of the executive board cannot be a member of the governing bodies of a political party such as the president, a member of the presidency or the executive board, etc. This is aimed at depoliticising national councils, which is also a request coming from the EU.

Recently, the Bosniak National Council and the Albanian National Council stated that the adopted amendments to minority laws diminish the rights of minorities and called for an assessment of their constitutionality. What is your comment?

I cannot agree with this, given that the legislative framework related to the rights of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia, according to international experts, is above the European average, with original solutions that cannot be found in other countries. On the other hand, we have worked on all of these laws in a wide consultation process with national councils of national minorities. Everyone had the opportunity to make comments and suggestions, many of which were incorporated into these laws.

Serbia is a free country, in which everyone has the opportunity to address the Constitutional Court and ask for an opinion on the constitutionality of any law provision.

Minority News - Elections 2018

You can follow all news related to the elections for national councils of national minorities from September 18th on our new site www.izbori2018.minoritynews.rs.

According to the data of the Republic Electoral Commission, until the date of conclusion of this issue of the Minority News Bulletin, the following election lists were declared:

Ashkali National Minority:

- Election List "For Victory" - Erdelj Osman/Za pobjedu – Erdelj Osman

Bosniak National Minority:

- Election List "Self-Determination - dr Sulejman Ugljanin" / Samoopredeljenje - dr. Sulejman Ugljanin

- Election List "Bosniak Heritage" - Akademik Muamer Zukorlić Muftić/Matica Bošnjaka – akademik Muamer Zukorlić muftića

- Election List "Vakat je – prof. dr Sait Kačapor" / "Vakat je – prof. dr Sait Kačapor"

Bunjevac National Minority:

- Election List "Bunjevci Together" / Bunjevci zajedno

- Election List Association of Citizens "Bunjevac Kolo" Sombor/Udruženje građana Bunjevačko kolo Sombor

Vlach National Minority:

- Election List Vlachs for Serbia/Vlasi za Srbiju

- Election List Association "Gergina" Negotin / Primarius Dr. Sinisa Čelojević

Egyptian National Minority:

- Election List Esnaf - Kujtim Demir

- Election List Egyptians for Peace, Stability and Prosperity in Serbia Agim Ajra

Hungarian National Minority:

- Election List "Magyar Összefogás - Hungarian Unity" / Madjarska sloga

German National Minority:

- Election List "Gerhard" of Danubian Germans - Together, Antun Beck

Roma National Minority:

- Election List "All-European Roma Mo-

vement" / Sveevropski romski pokret

Romanian National Minority:

- Election List "Romanian List - Dr Jon Omoran" / List Românească - Dr Ion Omoran

Ruthenian National Minority:

- Election List "Ruthenians Together" / Rusini zajedno / Rusnaci vs

- Election List "Being and Remaining Ruthenian" / Biti i ostati RUSIN - OLENA PAPUGA/Buc i ostac RUSNAK - OLENA PAPUGA

- Election List "For Ruthenians – Zeljko Kovac" / Za Rusine - Željko Kovač/Za Rusnaci - Željko Kovač

- Election List "Ruthenian Future" / Rusinska budućnost / Руска будучност

Slovak National Minority:

- Election List "Slovaks Forward!" / Slováci vpred! Pavel Surovi Slováci napred! / Slováci vpred! - Pavel Surov

- Election List "Slovak Heritage in Serbia" / Matica Slovaca u Srbiji Libushka Lakatos/Matica slovenská v Srbku - Libuška Lakatošová

As a State, We Nourish the Unity of Diversity

Source: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government



On September 6, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Branko Ružić, met with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Lamberto Zannier and presented the Ministry's activities on improving the conditions for the exercise of minority rights in Serbia.

Ružić pointed out that this year alone four regulations under the Ministry's jurisdiction were adopted that improve the legal framework and status of national minorities in Serbia.

"These laws have been received with the approval of members of national minorities, and also praised by the OSCE and other reference international institutions that participated with the Ministry in a transparent and inclusive law drafting procedures," Ružić said and assessed that, in some segments, Serbia is far ahead of individual EU member states when the exercise of minority rights is in question.

The Minister reminded that the Fund for National Minorities was launched last year, after a 15-year deadlock, and that the Fund's budget was 1.8 million dinars in the previous year, while 21.8 million dinars were provided in 2018.

The Minister pointed out that national minorities are a great value and comparative advantage of Serbia in relation to many countries in the region.

"The fact that about 13% of the total po-

pulation in Serbia consists of members of national minorities speaks of the unity of differences that we nourish as a state and as a government, and therefore we are trying to improve it," Ružić said.

He thanked Zannier and the OSCE Office for the outstanding cooperation and expressed his hope that they will jointly continue to improve the legal regulations and status of members of national minorities in Serbia.

Zannier assessed that Serbia has a good legislative framework that deals with national minorities and supported recent amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities and the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, as well as the participation of members of national minorities in that process.

"We put emphasis on communication with members of national minorities so that we can hear what their priorities are, especially before the coming elections for national councils," Zannier said.

He assessed positively the form of cooperation that the state has with national minorities through bilateral commissions dealing with the issues of national minorities and praised the fact that Serbia is making efforts to integrate national minorities into society.

"I can see that Serbia works well in this area. Investing in resolving issues related

to the status of national minorities is a resource for the whole society," the Commissioner said.

Asked by journalists whether the initiatives of the Albanian and Bosniak National Council, which require the Constitutional Court to reconsider the constitutionality of the amended laws, could provoke political tensions and influence the upcoming elections, Zannier noted that it is positive that national minorities in Serbia can take part in ratification of laws, as well as to express their disagreement with them and address the Constitutional Court.

"I welcome the fact that this possibility exists at all, because in theory it should contribute to a reduction in tension," Zannier said.

Answering the same question, Minister Ružić ruled out the possibility that the demands of certain national councils would influence the election cycle and underlined that this is a proof of the democracy of a well-regulated system.

"The process of drafting this regulation was very inclusive and transparent, with the participation of representatives of all national councils of national minorities in Serbia. They had the opportunity to point to their comments and suggestions, many of which were incorporated into these laws. This is a legitimate way, and the public will judge what the background is," Ružić concluded.

Government Committed to Enhancement of Minority Rights

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights



On September 6, Director of the Government Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, met with the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, Lamberto Zannier, and informed him on the activities of the Action Plan for the Exercise of National Minority Rights, stressing that the creation and monitoring of the activities of this Action Plan show in the best possible way the firm commitment of the Government that the laws related to the exercise of the rights of national minorities are fully applied.

Paunović stated that eight reports have been prepared to date, and that the ninth report on the implementation of this strategic document is being drafted.

The trainings that were held in the previous period have achieved their goal, which is to raise the quality of reporting of all participants in this process, especially local self-governments, who know best the needs and problems faced by members of national



minorities, the Director of the Office said.

Paunović presented to the High Commissioner the reports prepared by Serbia relating to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and stressed that, after the reporting cycles, the implementation of the recommendations received will follow. She announced that a list of all the recommendations received will be made in order to monitor adequately their implementation in an effective way.

Paunović said that for this year, 245 million

dinars were allocated from the budget of Serbia for regular financing of the work of national minority councils.

The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Lamberto Zannier, welcomed the efforts that the Office for Human and Minority Rights invests in the preparation and implementation of the Minority Action Plan, stressing that the AP

is a solid foundation for further work. Zannier praised the efforts of the Government and commitment to work on the promotion of the rights of national minorities, as well as the inclusiveness and transparency of the overall process of reporting on the implementation of this action plan.

The meeting was also attended by the head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, Andrea Orizio.

The meeting was organized during the visit of the High Commissioner to the Republic of Serbia from 5 to 7 September 2018.

Ružić: I do not Expect Any Problems in the Elections in Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa

Source: www.kt.gov.rs



Ranko Ružić, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, said in Leskovac that "members of national minorities, as loyal citizens of Serbia, certainly have the opportunity to affirm their values and, in keeping their tradition, do so within the state of Serbia."

When asked by the journalists whether he expected members of the Albanian national minority to participate in the elections for the National Minority Council in the context of the negotiations on Kosovo and Metohija and the request of the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja to secede to Kosovo and Metohija, he replied



that "he does not expect any problems".

"Elections for representatives of national councils of national minorities have been

slated for November 4. The most important thing is that we have done everything that had to be done. We managed to improve the legislative framework before the elections, and ratified a set of minority laws," Ružić said. As he said, he "would not give exclusivity to any minority community in Serbia".

"I think it is a great treasure that almost 30 percent of Serbia's population belongs to national minorities," he added.

Ružić expects that "everyone will use their voters' right to participate in the November 4 elections, to propose their lists and, after that, national councils will further improve their work, promoting their values that are truly precious to Serbia."

Sombor Hosts "Europe in My City" Conference

Source: RTV

| Photo: Office for Human and Minority Rights



n September 20, Sombor hosted the "Europe in My City" Conference, on the protection and exercise of human and minority rights. In her remarks

at the conference, Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, noted that Europe is in all Serbian cities, and that Serbia is proud of it.

Paunović said that the entire legal system in the field of human and minority rights protection was based on international standards and agreements made within the framework of the United Nations and the Council of Europe. She added that it could even be said that the exercise of the rights of members of national minorities is above the European average and that, in certain segments, it can serve as an example for many member countries of the European Union.

She particularly noted that Serbia is one of the few countries that, in addition to individual rights, has also recognized collective rights to members of national minorities.

"In this way, members of national minorities are enabled to participate directly or through their representatives in decision-making or decide on specific issues related to their culture, education, information and official use of languages and scripts," she explained.



She also said that, in recent years, the reports of the relevant bodies in regard to the respect and exercise of international norms and standards in this area do not contain serious criticism, but mainly point to the possibility of further improvement of the position of minorities. They sometimes note sporadic problems, weaker implementation and suggest additional measures, first of all in terms of removing the difficulties in the implementation of the legislative framework.

Paunović pointed out that further advancement of the position of national minorities should not be considered only in the function of European integration, and emphasized that this is an imperative for a democratic state for Serbia.

"I think there are no major structural and



systemic problems in their position that could in any way endanger the European integration of the country," Paunović said.

The Deputy Speaker of the AP Vojvodina Assembly, Damir Zobenica, also addressed the attendees and pointed out that MPs have the right to receive parliamentary documents in their mother tongue, ask questions in their mother tongue, and follow parliamentary sessions in their mother tongue, as the sessions of the Assembly are simultaneously interpreted into 5 languages.

However, as Prof. Dr Goran Bašić, the director of the Institute of Social Sciences noted, there is still ethnic distance in Serbia and no major shift has been made in relation to the 1990s, while the second problem is within the national communities themselves.

"There is a distance towards members of the Albanian, Bosniak, Roma and Croat national minorities. Another problem is that there is homogenization within the national communities, the language of the social environment is not learnt. Those who are educated in their mother tongue only cannot further engage in the education system, and they leave Serbia," Prof. Bašić said.

One of the areas of minority rights is information in the languages of national communities. An example is Radio Television of Vojvodina.

"Since 1975, RTV Vojvodina has "spoken" five languages, and now we have a radio program in 16 languages, and whereas the television program will be soon broadcast in 12 languages," Hajnalka Buda, editor of minority programs of RTV Vojvodina, said.



74 Projects for Better Information in the Languages of National Minorities Funded

Source: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government

On September 13, Minister Branko Ružić and representatives of 74 projects signed contracts on the allocation of funds from the Budget Fund for National Minorities, which this year amounted to 21.8 million dinars, 12 times more than in 2017. The funds can be used only for the purpose of better information in minority languages, as recommended by the Council of the Government of Serbia for National Minorities, which consists of both representatives of the state institutions and the presidents of national councils of national minorities.

"This is the second year in a row that the Ministry, after 15 years of non-activation, is distributing the funds from the Budget Fund," Ružić said, adding that the funds available last year were much more modest and amounted to 1,800,000 dinars, and that the Ministry will aim to increase the fund additionally in the next year.

Minister Ružić noted that, for the Ministry, this year is the year of minorities, not only because of the Fund, but also because regular elections for national councils are to be held, the legislative framework has been significantly improved in the spring, and the

Special Voters' List has been additionally enhanced.

"In all this, the role of you, representatives of civil society is of great importance, and you, together with us, contribute to the regulations we ratify, and ensure that the policies we create correspond to the real needs of our citizens by coming up with initiatives, dialogue and implementing projects of public interest," Ružić said.

Representatives of the projects expressed their appreciation for the possibility to present national minorities in Serbia as a wealth of our country.

The First Human Rights School Completed

Source: Provincial Ombudsman

By the certificates award ceremony and the remarks by Prof. Dr. Zoran S. Pavlović, the Provincial Ombudsman, the first human rights school organized by the Provincial Ombudsman in Ečka, a village near Zrenjanin, was brought to completion.

The school lasted for three days - from August 22 to August 24, and it was attended by 20 students. The thematic repertoire of the school was focused on the competences of the Provincial Protector of Citizens, and the lectures on the topic of gender and equality,

children's rights, rights of national minorities, human rights instruments, as well as international standards in Serbia's accession to the European Union were provided by experts in the mentioned areas - Zorica Mršević, dr Ivana Stefanović, dr Goran Bašić, prof. Dr. Tanja Mišćević and prof. Dr. Zoran S. Pavlović. After each lecture, a debate was organized, and some of the topics, primarily those directly related to the work of the Provincial Ombudsman, were also processed.

The school, according to the students, met their expectations. Lectures were informative,

workshops were interesting, and the most interesting areas in the evaluation were the areas related to the rights of the child and the issue of gender and gender equality.

Organization of the human rights school was supported by the OSCE Mission to Serbia, and John David Clayton, Head of the Department of Democratization of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, also addressed its participants.

The Provincial Protector of Citizens - the Ombudsman will continue to organize similar schools in the future in order to improve the culture of human rights.

Certificates Awarded to Participants in the Summer School "We and the Others. Overcoming the Borders."

Source: Forum for Ethnic Relations

Participants in the Summer School of Interethnic, Intercultural and Inter-confessional Dialogue (AID), held at Srebrno Jezero, were awarded diplomas for successful completion of activities within a week-long seminar called "We and the Others. Overcoming the Borders".

From August 26 to September 1, eleven young people attended the summer school in order to gain new knowledge that will help them in monitoring and analyzing intercultural, interethnic and inter-confessional relations in Serbia.

The aim of this type of education is to help young people acquire knowledge

about achievements and problems related to the politics of national minorities, but also to acquire skills to solve these problems.

The certificates received by the participants are compliant with the standards of the ERMA and the European Student Mobility Standard, and they will help them in their further work on the issues and topics they deal with.

Sixteen lecturers from Serbia and abroad, in addition to the lectures on pre-determined topics, were also at the disposal to the summer school participants for a wider discussion on certain topics that were of interest to them. To this end,

three panel discussions were held, and a psychodrama group workshop was also organized.

Participants in the summer school had the opportunity to visit Golubacki Grad and the medieval fortress, which was recently restored and accessible to visitors, located on high cliffs at the entrance to the Djerdap Gorge.

The organizer of the summer school was the Forum for Ethnic Relations in cooperation with the Higher School for Business Economics and Entrepreneurship (PEP), the ERMA program, Sarajevo-Forli, with the support of the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Belgrade.

Jews Celebrated the New Year

Source: RTS

Photo: Jewish Municipality of Zemun

On September 10, Jews from around the world celebrated the arrival of the 5779th Jewish New Year-Rosh Hashanah. They believe that at that time a man is freed from social distress, in order to enter into the New Year cleared of all sins. And for the whole year to be sweet, there are sweets - apples and honey - served on the New Year's table.

"We greet each other with "Shanah Tovah" - Happy New Year," Danilo Medić, president of the Jewish municipality, said.

He added that the only difference between the New Year's dinner and an ordinary dinner is in dipping the challah, the bread, into honey instead of salt, so that the New Year would be sweet.

"We also dip apple into honey so that the New Year would be sweet. And



there's another symbol linked to the New Year, pomegranate. It has a lot of seeds in it, which means that the New Year will be fertile," Medić says.

Jewish New Year is counted in the Torah from the beginning of the world.

It is celebrated for two days, in synagogues, with prayers of repentance.

This is a period of retrospective, acknowledging and repenting mistakes and bad things done in the previous year, so that they could be corrected in the New Year.

School Plus Bicycle Caravan - Czech-Serbian Friendship Race

Source: School Plus

For the seventh time in a row, the School Plus organized a bicycle caravan, the "Czech-Serbian Friendship Race" with support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications of the Republic of Serbia, and in cooperation with the local self-government, the National Council of the Czech National Minority, the Church, and numerous friends of the School Plus.

Ninety-six active cyclists participated in the caravan that travelled from Bela Crkva to Češko Selo, while, in Češko Selo, there were 136 members and friends of the School Plus. The caravan was accompanied by a dozen of organizers and several cars that secured the safety of all participants. The organizers were particularly pleased with the fact that a Czech language teacher, Standa Havel, and his family came all

the way from the Czech Republic to participate in the caravan.

An outdoor art studio was created in the beautiful nature of Češko Selo, poetry was recited in both languages, and participants also visited the Museum of Czechs, where a short lecture was held.

Bela Crkva and the School Plus were

promoted through recreation, culture, and art. Each participant was given a gift and a number of prizes were awarded.

In the afternoon, the caravan drove back on the same route, again with a high level of safety. In their thanksgiving messages, all participants expressed the same wish - to meet again in Bela Crkva next year.



Intensive Week of Collecting Signatures of Support

Source: Croatian Word



Members of the Croatian community throughout Vojvodina and in Belgrade are working both in organized groups and independently on collection of support signatures for electors who will participate in the November 4 electoral assembly and elect new members of the Croatian National Council. For the time being, the only group that is doing this publicly, with the campaign in the media and in the social networks, are activists gathered around the HRvati List, made by the Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina, and dozens of Croatian associations and individuals.

The activists of the HRvati List are working daily on collecting and verifying the signatures in Subotica (in the House of DSHV on working days from 17:00 to 21:00), and, in the last ten days they have done it also in Petrovaradin, Tavanakut, Đurđin, Žednik, Vajska, Plavni, Stanišić, Monoštor, Surčin, Zemun and Sremska Mitrovica, as well as in several places in Banat.

"Signatures for twenty electors have been collected so far. Regarding the technical aspects of the registration, there have been no major problems, and we have been successful in the collection of signatures so far," DSHV President, Tomislav Žigmanov, says.

With the engagement in the above-mentioned cities and villages, the collection of signatures will be organized in other places where Croats live in a larger number - Sonta, Bajmok, Mirgeš, Verušić, Mala Bosna, Bikovo, Odžaci, Šid, Slankamen, Golubinci and Belgrade.

Monoštor and Stanišić

In the territory of the City of Sombor, the support to the HRvati List has been given by the associations of KUDH Bodrog from Monoštor and HKD Vladimir Nazor from Stanišić, where the collection of signatures was also organized. Stanišić's electorate candidates are: Ivan Karan, candidate of MO DSHV from Stanišić and Marko Gundić, candidate of HKD Vladimir Nazor. Support to these candidates has been given by Croats from Ridica, Čonoplja, Lemeš and Aleksa Šantić. Karan collected 60 required signatures, and Gundić's collection of signatures was organized at the office of the notary Lidija Karanović in Sombor, 1 Arsenija Čarnojevića St., on September 21.

Collection of Signatures in Srem

The activists of the HRvati List collected signatures in Sremska Mitrovica, in the parish hall of St. Dimitry, every working day from 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm and on Sunday after Holy Mass from 10.30 am to 12 pm. According to activist Zlatko Načev, the collection of signatures has been successful thus far, with no problems in regard to the services provided by public notaries. However, there is still a call to all those interested in providing support to a candidate to do so in September in the above mentioned addressed. Signatures are also collected in the parishes in Zemun and Surčin.

"On Tuesday, September 4, signatures were collected for the first elector from Surčin, pensioner Josip Čačić. The collection of signatures for the second elector, Irena Obradović, has begun. A few voters have submitted a written request for registration in the Special Voters' List by mail due to

old age or inability to do it in person, and we are currently waiting for the response of the competent Surčin authorities on whether they will accept this way of submitting the request," President of the Croatian Library Fischer from Surčin, Katica Naglić said.

Croatian Civic Alliance, too, Collects Signatures of Support

The activists of the Croatian Civic Alliance, headquartered in Novi Sad, have also collected signatures of support for electors. The president of this association, Dr Tomislav Stantić, was the leading candidate on the list that had eight councillors in the last convocation of the Croatian National Council.

"Every candidate for the electorate in my place of residence is organizing a collection of signatures, and we will provide assistance as much as anyone can have in collecting a sufficient number of signatures," Stantić says.

The Croatian Civil Alliance has not come up with a list yet, but their activists collect signatures for participation in the electoral assembly on November 4th.

"We have not prepared any list in advance, the lists will be made on November 4," Stantić says. According to him, the Croatian Civil Alliance does not have a special program for these elections, it follows the principles of the 2016 Alliance Program Initiative, available on their website at www.hgs.org.rs.

The deadline for the collection of the signatures is October 4, and, for the electoral assembly to be held, the presence of at least 60 electors is needed, with a total of 3,600 support signatures to be collected.

Promotion and Support to the "Bunjevacs Together" List for the Coming Elections for the National Minority Councils

Source: Bunjevac Media Center



On September 6, at the premises of the Bunjevac Heritage, the list "Bunjevacs Together" and the Bunjevac associations that provide support to this list were presented.

The list "Bunjevacs Together" aims to achieve unity and not to repeat mistakes from the previous elections, when a large number of lists sent a bad message for potential voters. The candidates hope that the joint election list will have a positive impact on the Bunjevac national community and that the new convocation of the Bunjevac National Minority Council will be able to implement all envisaged objectives.

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The Bunjevac associations that support the list are: BKC "Subotica" - Subotica, KUD "Bunjevka" - Subotica, BKC "Bajmok" - Bajmok, BKC "Tavankut" - Tavankut, BKC "Novi Sad" - Novi Sad, BKC "Lemeš" - Lemeš, KUD "Aleksandrovo" - Subotica, UG "Bunjevac Heritage" - Subotica, UG "Bunjevac Youth Center" - Subotica, UG "Bunjevci" - Novi Sad, Bunjevac Educational and Research Center "Ambrozije Šarčević" - Subotica, UG "Bunjevac vilas" - Mala Bosna, UG "Vila potiska" - Becej, UG "Bunjevac kasina" - Subotica, UG "Bunjevci Ljutovo" - Ljutovo, Bunjevac Media Center - Subotica, Bunjevac Media Center - Sombor.

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The citizens' association "Bunjevac Kolo" from Sombor expressed the desire to participate in the elections independently with its own list.

Slovenian Community

The Slovenian Community from Serbia at the Bled Strategic Forum

Source: Association of Slovenians "Sava"



Each year, the Bled Strategic Forum (BSF) gathers most officials from the Republic of Slovenia and other countries as well as strategic partners from the business sector. BSF is one of the most important economic and political events in the region of Southeast Europe. This year, the Forum hosted 1200 participants from 80 different countries, the program featured 27 panels with more than 180 speakers, while the event was supported by as many as 99 partners and sponsors.

At the invitation of the Office for Slovenians Abroad, the President of the National Council of the Slovenian National Minority in the Republic of Serbia, Saša Verbič, and a member and representative of the Slovenian "Sava" Society in Belgrade, Aurena Dinic, attended the panel "Diaspora as a Bridge in Contemporary International Relations", about the importance of the Diaspora for Slovenia, modern ways of invol-

ving the Diaspora in activities to preserve cultural and linguistic identity, as well as the challenges faced by the states in relation to their Diasporas and how to overcome them. The panel was opened by the outgoing minister, Gorazd Žmavc, who, in his introductory address, talked about the significance of the Slovenian Diaspora for Slovenia. Speakers from different countries followed, giving examples of good practice in how Diaspora relations are fostered by other countries. As a positive example, Deputy Foreign Minister of Greece, Terence Spenser Nikolaos Quick, said that so far over 60,000 trips to Greece have been organized for young people from their Diaspora, in order to get acquainted with the country they come from. Dr. Zvone Žigon of the Office for Diaspora Slovenians has been complementing examples of projects and programs organized by Slovenia for their Diaspora, such as language schools, projects to encourage youth activism in

border countries with Slovenia, and new approaches to preserving the Slovenian language - such as an online language course. The speakers noted that one of the great challenges facing Slovenia is the brain drain, i.e. the departure of a large number of highly qualified labour force, primarily the younger population.

The conclusion of the panel is that there is a lot of what has been done in Slovenia's relations towards the Diaspora, and the results of this engagement can be seen now. However, there is a lot that can still be done. Slovenia is learning through exchange of experiences with other countries. This is also evidenced by the position of the candidate for the new Minister of the Office for Foreigners of Slovenia, Jožef P. Česnik, whose attitudes are positive regarding the deepening and strengthening of relations with the Diaspora and even more attention dedicated to the Western Balkans.

The Sixth Generation of Students Attending Classes in the Bosnian Language

Source: BNV

The Bosniak National Council, the highest representative body of Bosniaks in the Republic of Serbia, expressed satisfaction over the increase in the number of students who attend all classes in the Bosnian language.

The Council congratulated parents whose children attend classes in the

Bosnian language and thus show a desire and a high responsibility for preserving the national, ethnic and cultural identity of the new generations of the Bosniak people in Sandzak by acquisition of knowledge and skills in the mother tongue and literature, history, culture and tradition.

Because of the changes in the curriculum for the first and fifth grade,

procurement of textbooks for these classes both in the Serbian language and in the languages of national minorities will be delayed.

With the help from donors, the Bosniak National Council will endeavour this year to provide textbooks from a group of national subjects to pupils of the first grade in the Bosnian language classes free of charge.

Promotion of the Book "Tales from Diaspora and Homeland Countries"

The book "Tales from Diaspora and Homeland Countries" by Admir Lisica was promoted in the Bosniak National Council on September 15.

The book is about people who started their journey to Diaspora after the end of the Second World War, but also about successful Bosniaks from the homeland countries in the region. The stories from the book were published in several Bosnian and regional media, the regional network of Al Jazeera Balkans, the media agency Anadolu Agency, on the portal Akos.ba, as well as in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian weekly newspaper Stav.

The promoters of the book were Dr Fuad Bačićanin, director of the museum in Novi Pazar, and Sanadin Voloder, journalist and editor of the book. At the end of the evening, the author of the book, Admir Lisica, thanked the Bosniak National Council for the promotion of the book and shared his experiences from talking with the Bosniaks living around the world with the audience.



A Pragmatic Approach to Improving the Position of Minorities in Romania and Serbia

Source: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government

State Secretary of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Ivan Bošnjak, and State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, George Ciamba, both co-chairing the Intergovernmental Mixed Commission for National Minorities of Serbia and Romania, discussed cooperation in solving issues relevant to the situation of the Romanian and Serbian national minorities in the two countries in the upcoming period.

The focus of their discussion were education and information issues, and Ciamba expressed satisfaction that the Serbian President, Aleksandar Vučić, publicly promised to improve the information of the Romanian national minority in Serbia in their mother tongue, as well as to increase the number of teaching staff for classes

in the Romanian language.

Ciamba assessed the need for a pragmatic performance in the work of the Intergovernmental Mixed Commission for National Minorities, and representatives of Serbia and Romania agreed to hold the next meeting of the Commission's co-secretaries on October 30 and 31 in Bucharest.

He concluded that he expects the constructive work of this Commission and a positive role in the process of European integration of Serbia, as well as Romania's support during the upcoming EU Presidency.

At the meeting in Bucharest, already established conclusions shall be confirmed and new recommendations should be prepared in the interest of improving the

status of both minority communities in the two countries.

State Secretary Bošnjak informed Ciamba about recent meetings with representatives of the Romanian national minority in central and eastern Serbia, attended by the Consul General of Romania, as well as the new legal solutions concerning minority issues, in the drafting of which the representative of the National Council of the Romanian National Minority took part.

Bošnjak also said that all actions related to the elections for national councils of national minorities are proceeding as planned, and that 18,970 citizens with the right to vote for the National Council of the Romanian national minority are currently enlisted in the Special Voters' List.

Roma Community

Roma Empowerment through ROMACTED

Source: Rhythm of the City

Promoting good governance and empowerment of the Roma community at the local level is being implemented in 11 towns and municipalities in Serbia. The task of local self-governments, including Kragujevac, based on the signed Memorandum of Cooperation, is that by building political will and sustainable policies through the engagement of local authorities, they work to improve democratic public administration, strengthen the commitment of institutions, their capacities, knowledge and skills in the work on Roma inclusion.

Dragan Gračanin, the president of the Association of the Coordinators for Roma Affairs, visited Kragujevac with his associates in order to get acquainted with the activities so far realized in the process of forming the Local Action Group and defining priorities.

According to information from the field, the problems of the Roma in Kragujevac

are discrimination, retraining and additional qualification for deficient professions, possibility of scholarships for high school students, unemployment. They are interested in knowing more about problems of drug addiction, domestic violence and reproductive health through workshops.

There are many problems, and our task is to define priorities and start solving these problems, Prof. Nedeljko Manojlović, a member of the City Council for Education and the Contact Person of the City of Kragujevac for the implementation of the ROMACTED Program, said. He emphasized the importance of the Local Action Plan for the Inclusion of Roma for this year, and it is precisely the field information that will significantly contribute to the development and improvement of the new LAP, which should come to life next year.

Regarding the establishment of the Institutional Working Group, apart from

representatives of local self-government and Roma NGOs, we plan, Manojlović said, to include the Center for Social Work, the National Employment Service, and the Red Cross.

The key to the success of ROMACTED, according to Dragan Gračanin, is to establish communication with people in the field, whom we have asked what is important to them in everyday life. Out of the 11 cities involved in the implementation, six have highlighted Roma culture and Roma folklore, or sections, as priorities. This has not been envisaged by the Strategy or the Action Plan. Finally, the Roma population has the opportunity to identify their problems on their own, and it is up to the local community to solve them. It is a process that should influence the improvement of the position and strengthening of the Roma community in the next two years, in order to enable them to take on civil responsibility and represent their interests themselves.

Hungarian Cultural Society "Karika" Opened in Belgrade

Source: RTV Panon / Magyar Szó



On September 8, the Hungarian Cultural Society "Karika" was opened in Belgrade. The Society already has 60 members.

The idea of establishing a Hungarian cultural society came from Anet Tokić Varga, a native of Budapest, who was active in Vršac with the "Sandor Petefi" scholarship program. She says that the main goal is to popularize the Hungarian language and culture, teach Hungarian children in their mother tongue, and also provide lectures about culture, history and tradition.

As part of their program, they plan to organize Hungarian language courses, both for children and adults, movie evenings, where Hungarian films with Serbian subtitles will be shown, quiz evenings, and open-fire fish stew cooking classes. The Society's long-term goals include the organization of major events, excursions, Hungarian kindergarten, weekend school, and folklore classes.

The premises of the Society are open every Wednesday and Saturday from 18:00 to 20:00.



The Hungarian National Minority Council Supports Classes with a Small Number of Students

Source: RTV Panon



The Hungarian National Council has decided that classes with small number of students will be established in 40 schools.

At a session held on September 14, the Hungarian National Minority Council made a decision to open 24 elementary and 16 high school classes in the Hungarian language with less than 15 students per class.

Chairman of the Executive Board of the Hungarian National Council, Aniko Jeras, said that the Executive Board supported the opening of 32 classes with small number of students in 24 elementary schools. Of this number, seven classes will be combined.



Masters of Photography in Kisač

Photo: Hlas ljudi

Uhe third Biennale of the Masters of Photography was officially opened at the Gallery of the Slovak National House in Kisač on September 15. This time, 29 authors presented their work - 25 from our country, three authors from Slovakia and one from Great Britain.

The gallery's director, selector and curator of the exhibition, Mihal Madacki, presented the photographers, who included: Jan Valo, Jan Agarski, Darko Dozet, Radivoj Hadžić, Jaroslav Pap, Jasmina Panjik, Elena Shranka, Andrea Mernjik, and others.

Speaking about the exhibition, academic painter Mihal Djurovka emphasized that the great interest of the authors for participation in this year's Biennale of Photography justifies the exhibition's existence. According to him, the Gallery of the Slovak National House did the right thing when it decided to establish this biennale, in order to present the photography to the public in this way, too.

"Photography has long been a fairly equal segment of fine arts with other classical branches of artistic creativity. Especially in the contemporary

era of photography, it is a daily medium of both the applied and the artistic expression," Djurovka said, emphasizing that various genres of photography are also present this time - from the reporting, rock, applied artistic, non-standard, experimental...

The exhibition was opened by Ana Hrčan-Leskovac, director of the Institute for Culture of Vojvodina Slovaks, who pointed out that after October 10th, when the exhibition will close in Kisač, it might move to the premises of the Institute in Novi Sad.





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