

**Work of Inter-Ethnic
Councils Needs to Be
Enhanced**

**Presentation of the
Eleventh Report Scheduled
for Early August**

55 Minority **News**

July 2019



Doghi: The Roma Are Presented in a Very Unbalanced Way

**Committee on
Standardization: There Is No
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**The “Beauty of
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in Bela Crkva**

HIGHLIGHTS



Presentation of the Eleventh Report Scheduled for Early August

The Director of the Government Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, emphasized that the drafting and continuous monitoring of activities from the Action Plan for the Exercise of National Minority Rights shows in the best possible way the Government's firm commitment to the laws and acts related to the exercise of national minority rights and their full implementation. Paunović stated that ten reports on the implementation of this strategic document had been prepared and presented thus far, that a total of 1013 contributions have been submitted, and that 73% of the activities have been fully implemented or are being continuously implemented by the end of this reporting period.



Exhibition on Diplomatic Relations between Serbia and Bulgaria Opened

The exhibition "140 Years of Diplomatic Relations between Serbia and Bulgaria" was opened in Kalemegdan on July 24. The exhibition was organized by the Bulgarian Embassy in Serbia, the Archives of Serbia and the National Archives of Bulgaria. The opening of the exhibition was attended by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia and the Minister of the Interior, Nebojša Stefanović, and the Minister of the Interior of Bulgaria, Mladen Marinov, as well as the Head of the Department for Neighboring and Southeast European Countries at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Slobodan Vukčević, and, from the Bulgarian side, by the Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria to Serbia, Radko Vlaykov.



"Harvest Days" held in Vojlovica for the 25th time

In Vojlovica, for the 25th consecutive time, the traditional "Harvest Days" were organized on July 19-20. The central event of the festival began in the morning in front of the MKUD "Tamashi Aron" in Vojlovica. Women from Vojlovica, as well as from other associations from southern Banat, displayed their handicrafts and various food specialties that they prepared, while the harvesters gathered and formed a parade together with members of the Slovak Association "Djetvan".

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Hiding Behind Colorful Screens

"All that is edible has its festival, has its ijada" - we could hear this more than once. And we largely agree with this statement. According to some data, there are over 4,000 different events held annually in our country. They are mostly held in the countryside, with members of national minorities contributing to their organization, too. In addition to the praise, there is a lot of criticism at the expense of many "ijadas". However, it seems as if we forget that many of the villages, that used to burst with life, have now become desolate and are on the way of disappearing fully. These festivals, these "ijadas", are just another reason for these villages to live again, at least for a few hours.

We have stated that minorities also participate in numerous events. Various associations want to present their work, their home villages, and attract visitors as much as possible. Full stands of delicious treats and an indispensable art program send an idyllic picture of the village, of a particular minority. Carelessness, colorfulness, harmony! Each traveler brings home fond memories of a particular place, unaware that almost every part of the festival is imbued with a blackmail, direct and indirect. In such cases, only one question arises: Is politics really stronger than a decade of coexistence with members of one's people? Is self-interest really stronger than interpersonal relationships? Sadly, we can increasingly answer this question affirmatively.

We seemingly help our people, our mouths are full of beautiful words, while only our personal interest matters. We change statutes, we bring in "our" people, no matter how incompetent they are, because the previous ones were not good enough. And then we organize a festival where the smiling participants cheerfully parade under the spotlight, our opening speeches inevitably refer to a harmonious life of all minorities, and when the lights go off - the reality strikes. Fighting the windmill daily or leaving with your passport and suitcase in your hands? Is this the only thing we have left?

30 different national minorities live in Serbia



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The Roma Are Presented In a Very Unbalanced Way

The issue of national minorities is always a focus for each country. The greater number of minority members certainly contributes to the greater colourfulness of a particular country, but the number of tasks that the state must complete is greater, too. These tasks are largely fulfilled, but, in the case of certain minorities, some issues remain unresolved and the situation does not change drastically, especially when it comes to discrimination, which is the most prevalent in the Roma community. Our country is struggling with this problem, as well as the EU member states. Dan Pavel Doghi, Chief of the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, at the OSCE/ODIHR, confirms this, too.



MN: How would you assess the position of Roma in the EU member countries?

Overall slightly improved because accession to the EU has brought a number of improvements with regard to access of Roma to public services, among them civil registration, health care, access to education, to some extent also access to housing and employment. All countries that acceded to European Union had to meet preconditions to ensure that the legislation is adequate, that there is a prohibition of discrimi-

nation, and that the structures to work on the issue of antidiscrimination have been established. And this is important. We can see progress in varying degrees, but this process is still in an incipient stage. There is also this phenomenon of countries becoming members of the European Union and then not being sufficiently in focus from that moment on. It is like, once you join the club, it is assumed that everything is in place and working properly including access to rights and protection against discrimination. However, this is not the case when we speak about Roma. Perhaps

it works for other groups and segments of population, but not so much for Roma. Actually, in the past 15 years, all reports indicate that regardless of where Roma live - Central or South Eastern Europe or Western Europe, within European Union or outside of it - the overall sentiment of the majority population towards Roma is similar and it is the one of rejection. Roma still feel that they are not welcome in their own countries. Roma have lived on the European continent for over 1,000 years and they are still called upon to go back to India, to go back to

where they came from. They are still considered outsiders and it is not only an aspect of attitude but also an attitude-transposed interaction. And that reflects in a treatment that is not equal. We speak here of discrimination. The trend in European Union now is that it is becoming a bit more radicalized. Populists are gaining traction and they are scapegoating Roma for all problems, along with immigrants and refugees. And they actually contribute to fueling this anti-Roma sentiment. Other institutions and international organizations are calling this phenomenon *anti-gypsism*. I do not see a need to introduce a new formal terminology, we should deal with these attitudes and crimes under the umbrella of combating racism and discrimination and intolerance against Roma and Sinti. So, overall - going back to your question - there is a slight improvement but it is insufficient, because we speak of large population. There are more than 6 million Roma in the European Union and the scale and the magnitude of their problem is huge. By the pace that we see and the efforts invested by the states, unfortunately we will not see a significant improvement anytime soon.

MN: Are the EU nations sufficiently and adequately informed about identity and culture of Roma people?

I would say rather not and it is not necessarily because they cannot find or gather information. It is linked to what I have said previously, it is this attitude of rejection. They are simply not interested in the Roma population. They would rather have Roma outside of their visual range. Because it is annoying, it is displeasing. And to a good extent you can see that in the way that Roma are called in most of the countries. Roma are still called Cigani or Gypsies, especially in countries where English is the official language. And Cigan is derogatory in almost all countries. Perhaps not so much in Russia, but in all other countries the word Cigan has a very negative connotation. It is stigmatizing, it has never been the term that Roma introduced use when presenting themselves. There is no other way to introduce yourself, especially if you speak Romani language, than saying "Mesem Rom - I am Roma", which means: I am

an individual belonging to the group that calls themselves Roma. And even when we claim that we love Roma, we still call them Cigan. This goes even too extreme. Every year, in a number of countries there are motions for approving laws that impose that Roma should be called Cigan and not Roma. So it shows the level of rejection and prejudice that exists in Europe. And this is regardless whether we speak of the European Union member states or the countries outside of EU.

MN: What needs to be done to transform the negative perception of Roma people into a positive one?

I think that the biggest damage to the perception of Roma is done by the media. Media plays an essential role in how it shapes people's thinking, their perceptions. And, to a good extent, they eventually create attitudes towards certain groups, too. There have been numerous reports and studies in this regard, one can do an empirical exercise in the national media, search for keywords like Roma or Cigan. And, out of curiosity, see how Roma are portrayed in the articles that come up out of this exercise. They are overwhelmingly negative and biased. One can choose to portray only negative aspects, but every group and every society has such aspects. Simply put, media reporting is largely biased. By showing only the negative part of this community, it is almost trying to implant in people's minds that there is no alternative but the negative, which is obviously not true. So there is a very unbalanced portrayal of the Roma, which is overall overwhelmingly biased and prejudiced. This is done by the media itself or by the media allowing itself to be used by populist and extreme nationalist politicians or groups.

MN: What is the impact of the education on visibility of Roma people in the system as a whole?

Well, education is known to be one of the most powerful drives to produce positive outcomes. It has an essential role in the early formation of the individual, then it builds and adds layers upon layers to develop the person into an individual that is mature, skilled

enough, and has a good understanding of his or her role in society and how to contribute to this society. And this is true regardless of racial or ethnic origin. For Roma education is also important. It is among the most important drives and factors for achieving success and inclusion. And perhaps this is one of the fields or the areas, all the efforts done in the past 15 years or so by governments, by international organizations, by intergovernmental organizations, by civil society and various donors has registered success. You can see an increase in number of Roma children participating in preschool education and being part of early childhood development processes that are essential for the upbringing of children. Then you can see an increase in the number of Roma children entering primary school and successfully transitioning to the secondary and more and more to high school and tertiary education. In my previous professional capacity, I was the manager of international higher education scholarship program. It was the Roma Education Fund, working in 16 countries with the scholarship program having every year roughly 2 million Euros given out to approximately 1500 students. Now, if you compare this number with the numbers we had 10 years ago, when there were perhaps 2-3 hundreds Roma students, you can see the real impact. The demand is even higher, so it is obvious that investment in education pays off. It is the way to go forward. In my very brief intervention at the Regional Conference on the Decade of Roma Inclusion in Belgrade, I acknowledged the importance of this but I also hinted to a systemic problem. The experience of Roma Education Fund, all the projects including the scholarship for the tertiary education and many other good educational initiatives, they all have the same problem. They are either not taken on board by the countries or, if they are, it is a very incipient stage. These good practices have not yet been transformed in public policies in almost all states. Even more importantly, the dependency of Roma related initiatives on EU funding has not been overcome yet. One could see in Europe that most of these Roma related initiatives overwhelmingly happen only with funding coming from EU

or Norway, or other donors. This was only acceptable in a much earlier stage, when there was a need to pilot all sort of approaches to help diagnosing, identifying the problems and the needs, as well as the opportunities and eventually build approaches and practices that work. These practices and projects have worked for a limited number of people.. Again, we speak of a very large population in Europe - up to 12 million Roma. Many many of them living in a destitute situation. In order to produce a systemic change, we need to have a serious approach after at least 10 years of piloting all sort of projects and initiatives with the EU funding. It is high time the governments took over these good practices and started funding them as public policies from the state budget. The Roma are citizens of these countries and the responsibility for their wellbeing should never lie outside of the country. It is the responsibility of their respective governments and this is what we have advocate in the OSCE. In 2003, all 57 participating

states adopted an OSCE action plan to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti. This was 16 years ago and since then all sorts of pilot initiatives have been developed and implemented. If one would be honest and look deep into all these initiatives, they would find only a very small percentage of upscaling of these initiatives into public policies and then having them budgeted from the state. So this is the problem, this is perhaps the biggest problem.

MN: Can employment of Roma in highly visible jobs contribute to enhanced integration and acceptance by the other members of the society?

Roma are still insufficiently involved in the processes that concern them. It is important to acknowledge that the level of skills, expertise, experience and - when we speak of civil society - the level of organizational and institutional development, is not what it should be. We speak of a population that has faced lack of education, unemployment, discrimination, exclusion,

etc. But if the process is about them, as the OSCE says: nothing about Roma without Roma. You can see examples throughout Europe where Roma are involved, but this involvement is still insufficient and superficial. You can often see people participating in different events, but when it is about taking part in the real processes like designing the policies, developing the policies and being part of the implementation and later on being part of the evaluation, revision, and improvement of these policies, it is either not happening or it is still very insufficient. There is still paternalism and patronizing, which, on the long run, cannot produce the intended results. By now, we have at least those thousands of graduates from a higher education who have the skills that can be used by state institutions in all these processes. If you would hear them, they would appeal for an opportunity to use to these skills and contribute to the society, and this would be my main recommendation for the states.

Presentation of the Eleventh Report Scheduled for Early August

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights

Director of the Government Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, noted on July 22 that the drafting and continuous monitoring of activities from the Action Plan for the Exercise of Rights of National Minorities shows in the best possible way the Government's firm commitment to the laws and acts related to the exercise of the rights of national minorities and their full implementation.

Paunović said that ten reports on the implementation of this strategic document have been prepared and presented so far, that a total of 1013 contributions have been submitted,



and that 73% of the activities have been fully implemented or are ongoing by the end of this reporting period.

As she announced, the presentation of the Eleventh Report is scheduled for the beginning of August.

Paunović recalled that this action plan envisages action and input by 80 stakeholders, including ministries and other competent bodies, national councils of national minorities, provincial institutions, higher education institutions, civil society organizations, etc.

76 local self-government units and 53 councils for inter-ethnic relations are also involved in reporting, and the Office collects quarterly data from the stakeholders and prepares reports.

Work of Inter-Ethnic Councils Needs to Be Enhanced

Source: TV Pannon

The Center for Civil Society Development organized a conference in Novi Sad on July 16 to assess the activities of councils dealing with issues of inter-ethnic relations. Representatives from several Vojvodina municipalities, who participated in the conference, spoke about the revival of these bodies, as well as about the tasks that lie ahead.

Municipal councils for inter-ethnic relations were established 15 years ago, with the aim of discussing the equal exercise of the rights of national minorities, protecting them and promoting issues related to this area. These councils are intended to play an important role in the position of national minorities and in addressing local problems.

Snežana Ilić, director of the Center for Civil Society Development, believes that the system of inter-ethnic councils in Vojvodina is in a state of hibernation and that the work of the

councils is invisible. "There is a lack of any kind of education, further training. Even after 15 years, the councils are not inter-connected, they cannot exchange experiences in the interest of improving their impact. Nevertheless, the task that lies ahead is easy to solve. After 15 years, we are dealing with a system that has not been used, or is used only partially," the director of the Center said.

Vlado Radulović of the Office for Human and Minority Rights noted that there are a number of weaknesses in the work of the council. "We have different examples. In some local governments councils have been formed, but they function only on paper. We have local governments that set a positive example and provide regular semi-annual activity reports. There are such councils that also function, but not in accordance with the law," the advisor in the Office for Human and Minority Rights said.

"The state bodies, as well as civil and

minority organizations, should work on strengthening the capacities of these bodies, that is, they should inform them in detail about their role and tasks," Radulović concluded.

The municipality of Temerin, where the Council for Inter-ethnic Relations was established in 2005, also participated in the survey. At the time of its establishment, there were inter-ethnic conflicts in this municipality and the Council had a lot of work to do. Since then, the situation has improved, so they have not convened since 2011 - Isabella Urban, advisor to the Mayor (SVM) said.

"When I go to these meetings, I see the role of the Council completely differently. I do not think that local government has dealt with this topic enough, but it will certainly do so in the future. At the last session of the Municipal Assembly, we have already selected new members of the Council for Interethnic Relations," the Temerin council member added.

Active Participation in Two Regional Projects

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights

The Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights of the Government of Serbia, Suzana Paunović, said that the Office for Human and Minority Rights would actively participate in the implementation of two regional projects implemented by the European Union and the Council of Europe.

The first project, titled "Promoting Diversity and Equality in Serbia - Phase II", is about enhancing the capacity of stakeholders to protect and promote the rights of national minorities and LGBTI persons and to combat hate speech.

The project will have a gender-sensitive approach at all stages of implementation, with particular focus on minority groups, explained Paunović, who is also

the Chairwoman of the Steering Board of the project.

The project is implemented in cooperation with the Office for Human and Minority Rights of the Government of Serbia, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, and the Ombudsman.

According to her, another project titled "Strengthening the Human Rights Protection of Persons Imprisoned and Convicted in Serbia - Phase II" is about strengthening the human rights of persons deprived of their freedom

and convicted persons in Serbia, with a focus on the problems identified in the reports of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture and the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights.

The project is implemented in close cooperation and in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and the Office for Human and Minority Rights, as well as the Department of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture within the Office of the Ombudsman.

Both projects are scheduled to last for 36 months, Paunović said, adding that these projects are part of the joint program "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey".

Through Learning the Languages of Minorities towards a Better Mutual Understanding

Source: Heror Media Pont / Hlas Ljudu

The seventh summer school “Under the Trees on the Strand” was held at the Strand Beach in Novi Sad from July 1-27. The event was organized by the Novi Sad City Library, Heror Media Pont and the Center for Development of Minority and Local Media.

The aim of the event is to introduce children from the age of 5 to 12 to the culture, languages and media of minority communities through active multiculturalism and interculturalism. Starting this year, a program for young people aged 13 to 19 was introduced, with an intensive Slovenian language course for beginners.

During one month, students were able to acquire the basics of communication in Slovenian, Hungarian and Slovak as well as the sign language.

“The risk of not understanding each other during communication is enormous. To this end, the project aims to ensure mutual understanding and, through the teaching of minority languages and culture, help children and young people to continue to build a multicultural society, which the City of Novi Sad certainly is,” Nataša Heror from the Heror Media Pont said.

“I am very pleased that not only is this event surviving and taking place for the seventh time within the Library at the Strand, but it is also developing and progressing. I really think that minority language programs have a special place in the city that is recognized for its multilingualism and multiculturalism.



The contents are intended for those who will inherit the world, which is also extremely good, because this contributes to creating generations of

tolerance, mutual respect, who will be able to recognize the beauty of diversity,” Dalibor Rožić, a member of the City Council in charge of culture said.

The Slovenian language is in focus this summer at the Library at the Strand, and Roman Weixler, Deputy Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to Belgrade, stated at the opening of the event that such initiatives

are very good for further development of good relations between the two countries.



A very important segment of the event is the promotion of an active stay outdoors. Accordingly, a Hungarian language proficiency test quiz was held at the Rome site, in the heart of the forest above Beočin Selo. The hosts were the Beočin Forest Community, an association of private forest owners, which is also the oldest association of this kind in Europe and has existed since 1903.



“Collaborating with ‘Under the Trees on the Strand’ is valuable because we believe that the only way forward for children and young people is to get to know their environment and protect it, and we adults need to act as role models and keep order,” Sonja Kokić, Member of the Board of the Beočin Forest Community, said.

Wedding Customs at the Multicultural Festival in Sombor

Source: RTV
Photo: KC Sombor

The City of Sombor hosted the third Multicultural Festival “MultiKulti 2019”, which was organized by the Cultural Center “Laza Kostić”. During the two-day festival, on June 30 and July 1, more than three hundred members of cultural and artistic societies presented their traditional costumes and customs, with a special focus on wedding customs.



The Sombor's main street was swamped by the sounds of wedding dances. Under this year's motto of the festival “Let There Always Be Weddings!”, numerous cultural and artistic societies from the municipality of Sombor presented themselves, showing the beauty of diversity and ethnic wealth. Invitation to a wedding and decoration of the ceremonial flask are the oldest preserved customs of indigenous Serbs in Bačka.

“One week before the wedding, when the ceremonial flask “buklija” was decorated at the groom's house, the mother of the groom would put flowers and ornaments on the flask, and unmarried young men, first cousins of the groom, who will participate in the ceremonial invitation visits to family and friends, would come to the groom's house. The house would also be filled with girls singing and mak-

ing wreaths. They would decorate the young men's hats with flower wreaths, and they would pay them symbolically for this service,” Slobodan Vukobratović, a member of the “Ravangrad” City Cultural and Art Society said.

“There are many similarities with Bunjevac and Bačka customs - about the young people's appraisal, about their arrival, about the wedding dances and songs, however, they sing them differently, and the Bunjevacs have their own peculiarity,” Branko Kunić, choreographer at City Cultural Artistic Society “Sombor” explained.

Traditional Hungarian folk dances and costumes were presented by a folk group and a brass band.

“We are proud of our folk costumes and we love to wear them. It is true that only few of us have come today, but we are here to present our tra-

dition,” Leonora Radić of the “Moric Žigmond” Cultural Arts Society of Doroslov said.

The youngest festival in Sombor brought together over three hundred participants, members of cultural and artistic societies from Sombor and surrounding villages and showed the highest level of folk amateurism.

“The idea of this festival is to maintain the tradition, to pass it on to our children. Sombor is a multicultural environment and it was the starting point for the launch of our festival,” Vesna Paštović, the director of the Cultural Center “Laza Kostić”, said.

An ethnological lecture on wedding customs in Bačka wrapped up the main theme of this year's multicultural festival in Sombor, which over the course of two festival days turned into a great wedding in Bačka.



The “Beauty of Diversity” Festival in Bela Crkva

Source: BC Info

Organized by the “Češka Beseda Kruščica” Association and the National Council of the Czech National Minority, the seventh international and multicultural festival “Beauty of Diversity” took place in Bela Crkva on July 12- 14.

The sponsors of this year’s event are the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Belgrade, the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia, the Provincial Secretariat for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities, Bela Crkva Municipality and the National Council of the Czech National Minority.

On Friday, July 12, “Bela Crkva Majorettes”, folklore sections of the Cultural Club “Češka Beseda Kruščica”, “Češka Beseda Bela Crkva”, Cultural Club “Vukomir Vidić - Uča” from Kusić and Cultural Club “Đorđe Maletić” from Jasenov, as well as guests from the Czech Republic, the “Visočan” Folklore Ensemble, paraded in the center of Bela Crkva. A festive opening of the festival was held in the City Park with the intonation of the national anthems of the Republic of Serbia and the Czech Republic, performed by the Bela Musica town choir.

Bela Crkva Mayor Darko Bogosavljević addressed the audience expressing satisfaction with the large number of folk groups participating in the festival and extending a special welcome to the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Serbia, Tomasz Kuchta.

“The Czech Republic has helped the Bela Crkva municipality a great deal through numerous infrastructure projects and the preservation of the Czech cultural heritage. The high quality work of the organizing committee in the promotion of the festival resulted in continuously increasing number of participants and audiences, and the municipality of Bela Crkva recognized it and included the festival in the list of



events of municipal importance,” Bela Crkva Mayor Darko Bogosavljević said.

On behalf of the National Council of the Czech National Minority, the guests and the audience were greeted



by the President of the Council, Ljiljana Stehlik.

“I want all of us to recognize the wealth we have, the Czechs and all other national communities living in this region in harmony and love,” Ljiljana Stehlik said.

Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Belgrade, Tomasz Kuchta, officially opened the festival.

“I am very pleased to welcome you to Bela Crkva, which is the seat of

the National Council of the Czech National Minority and the center of the Czech minority in Serbia. We have 19 associations of Czech minority in Serbia, but it is Bela Crkva where we feel most at home, and I think that

all Czechs living in Bela Crkva are happy to live in this area. I would like to thank the local government of Bela Crkva municipality for their support to the Czech community in this municipality. This year, the Embassy of the Czech Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs support the activities of the Czech minority in the preservation of culture, traditions, language and in the field of education through 29 different

projects worth 23 thousand euros. It is very important that today there is a large number of inhabitants of the Bela Crkva municipality who will see part of the Czech folk dance. I have noticed that, in the folklore societies that nurture Czech folklore, there are also members who are not Czech,” Tomas Kuchta said.

A large audience in the City Park enjoyed the performance of “Bela Crkva Majorettes”, followed by a Serbian and Czech folk dances and songs.

“Harvesting Days” Held in Vojlovica for the 25th Time

Source: Pančevo, My Neighborhood

Photo by Hlas Ljudu

For the 25th consecutive time, the traditional Harvest Festival “Harvesting Days” was organized in Vojlovica on July 19-20.

The central program of the event began in the morning in front of the cultural artistic society “Tamashi Aron” in Vojlovica. Women from Vojlovica, as well as from other associations from southern Banat, displayed their handicrafts and various specialties that they prepared, while the harvesters gathered and formed a procession together with members of the Slovak Association “Djetvan”.

This year, the local government, too, has set aside money and provided support to organization of the “Harvesting Days” festival, as it wants to preserve the traditions and customs, which are also the cultural wealth of Pančevo.

The goal of the Harvesting Days is not to forget the importance and the way of removing the last bits of this year’s wheat crop by hand, the way it was done before the harvesting machines.

After the harvesting was over, wo-



men from Vojlovica, dressed in colorful costumes, served a traditional reapers breakfast: homemade bread, bacon, sausage, cheese and tomato. The reapers then proceeded through

Vojlovica, starting from Grobljanska Street, through Petefi Sandor, Jan-ko Čmelik, down Janošikova street to Boračka, where they completed their procession.

Women from numerous associations from Pančevo and the region had the opportunity to present their works at this event.

On the first day of the event, on July 19, guests from Hungary and Australia, the cultural artistic society “Hero Janko Čmelik” from Stara Pazova, as well as members of the cultural artistic societies “Tamashi Aron” and “Djetvan” from Vojlovica had the opportunity to present themselves. The event was closed with the harvest ball at the premises of the cultural artistic societies “Djetvan” and “Tamashi Aron”.

The organizers of this two-day event are the Hungarian Cultural and Artistic Society “Tamashi Aron” and the Slovak Cultural and Educational Society “Djetvan”.



Ambassador Repčekova Visits Surčin Municipality

Source: Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Serbia

Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Belgrade, Dagmar Repčekova, visited the Municipality of Surčin on July 25, where she talked with the Mayor of Stevan Šuša and his associates about planned projects and possibilities for establishing

more intensive cooperation, not only in the field of culture and assistance for Slovaks who live there, but also in the realization of economic projects, such as in the field of water treatment and purification.

Then, accompanied by the Mayor,

she visited Boljevcí, where the Slovak national minority lives, and became acquainted with the work of the local Evangelical Church. She then paid a visit to the Stajko's Ethno-House and the art colony at the Nautical Village "Pearl", which also features five eminent naive painters from Kovačica.



Montenegrin Community

Montenegrin State Day Marked in Lovćenac and Vrbas

Source: RTV

In the main hall of the House of Culture in Lovćenac, a celebration was held on the occasion of the 13th of July - National Day of Montenegro, organized by the National Association „Montenegro“ and the Association of Montenegrins „Lovćenac“.

The president of the National Association „Montenegro“, Aleksa Giljen, said that organizing this celebration in Serbia sends a message that Montenegrins in Serbia are not foreigners and that Serbia is not a foreign country to them.

“We urge the governments of Serbia and Montenegro to examine carefully each decision they make and to consider whether those decisions could disrupt the coexistence of the two

nations in both Serbia and Montenegro, and give rise to new tensions in the bilateral relations of the two countries,” Giljen said, the National Council of the Montenegrin National Minority reported.

President of the Association of Montenegrins „Lovćenac“, Nikola Muhadinović, expressed his satisfaction over the fact that the town of Lovćenac has once again proven that it really is the heart of the Montenegrin diaspora.

At the ceremony, held on July 10, a rich cultural and artistic program was organized with a focus on preserving Montenegro's national identity.

On July 13, the Statehood Day of Montenegro was also celebrated in Vrbas.



The rich cultural and artistic program in the town square attracted a large number of Vrbasans as well as guests from all over Vojvodina.

Montenegrin Cultural Evening was organized in the town square on the occasion of the holidays of the Montenegrin national community.

In addition to performers of traditional and pop music, the audience was introduced to cultural arts societies, musicians and poets from Vrbas and Lovćenac.

This year, in addition to the Montenegrin Cultural Network, the National Council of the Montenegrin National Minority has also taken part in the preparation of the “Montenegrin Cultural Evening” in Vrbas.

Straw Workshop in Subotica

Source: Bunjevac Media Center

As the bad weather conditions and extensive precipitation, made straw in Bajmok fields rather inconspicuous and dark, the members of the “Bunjevka” Cultural and Artistic Association continued to work on straw and grain wreaths at Ethno House “Kuntić” in Subotica.

- When we finished the workshop in Bajmok, and especially when we compared the wreaths made this year and last year, we saw how much the rain caused the straw to darken. We did not want to use it for decoration of the stage, the horse driven carriages, the participants and the guests, so we did our

best to improve the appearance of the straw - Kata Kuntić said and announced a new gathering:

- For July 27, we have scheduled the 20th exhibition dedicated to Dužijanica, there will be a few new exhibits in addition to the old ones. In cooperation with the Citizens Association “Bunjevac Kasina”, we will prepare a music evening, and we will try together to renew the custom that our gatherings end with a kolo



dance of all attendees - the President of the Cultural Association “Bunjevka” and the Chairwoman of the Committee for Culture in the Bunjevac National Minority Council said.

Nourishing Tradition



Bunjevac Cultural Center “Lemeš Bunjevacs” organized another in a series of straw workshops in the household of the Jozić family in Čonoplja on July 15. With the instruction of the straw art teacher Stipan Budimčević, children and adults were preparing straw for wreaths, crowns and decorations for the coming Dužijanica Festival, as well as collecting straw for the Lemeš Autumn 2019 Art Colony, which will be organized in early September.

As the symbols of the Dužijanica are

the wreath and beads made from grain ears, the children at the workshop tried their best to choose the best barley and wheat straw. For decades, the straw art has been one of the important legacies of the Bunjevacs, which has been nourished and passed on to the young generations by Stipan Budimčević. Every year in September, together with the other straw artists with whom he has worked and passed his knowledge to for a long time, this experienced straw artist organizes the Lemeš Autumn Art Colony.

At the workshop, the straw is sorted and prepared for the needs of this colony, so that the colony artists would show their skills and make beautiful works of art.

The children learned how to choose straw and how to prepare it, and they showed a great respect for the Bunjevac tradition.

The Lemeš Autumn 2019 Art Colony is supported by the Provincial Secretariat for Culture and Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities and the City of Sombor.

A New Bosniak Holiday

Source: BNV

President of the Bosniak National Council, dr. Jasmina Curić, submitted a request to the Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabić, asking that the Council's decision to proclaim September 28th as a new national holiday for Bosniaks be ratified at the next session of the Republic Council for Minorities.

At its last session, the Bosniak National Council decided to declare September 28 as the national holi-

day – the Bosniak Day. At the session of the First All-Bosnia Assembly, held in Sarajevo on September 28, 1993, the Declaration on the Return of the Historical Name of the Bosniak was adopted instead of the former name - Muslim.

This date has been accepted by all Bosniaks and is officially commemorated as Bosniak Day in all newly-created countries where Bosniaks live after the breakup of the former SFRY, except in the

Republic of Serbia. In addition to this holiday, Bosniaks in Serbia also mark May 11th - Bosniak National Flag Day, July 11th - Memorial Day and November 20th - Sandzak Day.

The Bosniak National Council also pays special attention to the memory of August 13 and 14, 1917, when the Sjenica Resolution was passed, as well as October 25, 26, and 27, 1991, when the referendum on Sandzak's autonomy was conducted.

Visit of Representatives of the International Organization Türksoy

Representatives of the International Organization of Turkish Cultures (TÜRKSOY) visited the Bosniak National Council on July 20 to meet with the leadership of the Bosniak National Council.

The International Organization of Turkish Cultures (TÜRKSOY) is an international cultural organization that covers countries and communities speaking languages belonging to the Turkish language family, and its youth choir came to Novi Pazar on the occasion of a concert at the Cultural Center.

President of the Bosniak National Council, dr. Jasmina Curić, thanked the guests for their visit but also the Embassy of Turkey in Belgrade, the Yunus Emre Institute and the City of

Novi Pazar for making the visit of the choir members possible.

"We Bosniaks are an indigenous people in the Sandžak region, who with our history, culture, our mother tongue, script, tradition, religion, customs and all our other specialties,

flag, which best speak of us as a people, who we are, and who we belong to. We, Bosniaks, are a nation that has bound its future with other peoples in Sandžak with whom we have been living in harmony and peace for several centuries," President Curić noted in her address to the guests.



Vice-President of the Council, prof. dr. Sait Kačapor presented the culture and tradition of the Sandžak Bosniaks to the guests and highlighted important events in the history of our people. Representatives of TÜRK-

SOY thanked the Bosniak National Council for their hospitality, presented the work of their organization and emphasized that one of their organization's goals was to connect cultures through music. The visitors to the Bosniak National Council in-

shape our Bosniak national identity - contributing to the richness of Sandžak's diversity and the state in which we live. The identity, past, present and future of Sandžak Bosniaks are embedded in our Bosniak national symbols, coat of arms and

cluded Mr. Elvin Aliziade, the Consul of Azerbaijan, Messrs. Dussanbay Kasseinov and Fatih Aliyi, Director and Secretary of TÜRKSOY, and Ms. Emina Brunčević and Mr. Senad Ljuca on behalf of the



Novi Pazar Youth Cultural Center.

Established in 1993 in Ankara, TÜRKSOY is working to strengthen the unity and brotherhood of the Turkish peoples, passing on a common Turkish culture to future generations.

Committee on Standardization: There is No Specific Language of Bosniaks

Source: RTV

The Committee for Standardization of the Serbian Language sent a letter to the National Council for Higher Education, stating that there is no specific Bosniak language that is linguistically different from Serbian and that adopting a so-called Bosnian language program at the university would cause invaluable damage to Serbian language and Serbian culture.

The Committee sent a letter to the National Council for Higher Education, because they had been informed that “the Council received the so-called study program for accreditation of Bosnian language at the State University of Novi Pazar.”

The National Council reminds that the procedure provides that an institution sends a request for accreditation of a particular study program to the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Control in Higher Education, and, if the Commission rejects the request, the institution may submit a complaint to the Council.

The National Council member, Prof. Miodrag Popović, Ph.D. insists that no complaint has been filed with the Council and that the Committee’s reaction is premature.

The Committee on Standardization of

the Serbian Language recalls that the views of significant Bosniak linguists also speak in favor of the fact that the Serbian and Bosnian languages do not differ linguistically.

“On the basis of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and, moreover, on the basis of scientific linguistic criteria, it is clear that symbolic languages cannot be studied as separate languages, since they represent only different names of the same, in this case, Serbian, standard language. Accepting this program, Serbia would be the only country in the world to study Bosnian as a separate language,” the letter said.

Claiming that they had insight into the proposed program, the Committee warned that the study’s aim was to legalize the transgression of scientific truths and the appropriation of Serbian linguistic and cultural heritage.

The Committee states that the conclusion of the program proposal states: “The study program contains sufficient elements of Serbian language and literature to enable students to teach Serbian language and literature in primary schools, which will be mentioned in the diploma supplement.”

The Committee considers that this degrades the Serbian language, Serbian literature and Serbian culture, because “the Serbian language and literature are subjugated to the Bosnian language, literature and culture.”

“Bosnian teachers prepared in this way would be entitled to take up Serbian language teaching as well. This shows the greatest nonsense that no Serbian institution can agree to. We believe that no Serbian politician will stand behind this, as it erodes eight centuries of Serbian literacy and culture,” the letter reads.

The position of the Committee was supported by the president of the Union of Slavic Societies of Serbia, prof. Prof. Rajna Dragičević, Ph.D., the Head and Deputy Head of the Department of Serbian Language with South Slavic Languages, Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, prof. Prof. Dr. Rajna Dragičević, Ph.D. and Prof. Aleksandar Milanović, Ph.D, the Head and Deputy Head of the Department of Serbian Literature with South Slavic Literatures, Faculty of Philology, Prof. Boško Suvajdžić, Ph.D. and Prof. Slavko Petaković, Ph.D., as well as the President and Vice President of the Serbian Language and Literature Society of Serbia prof. Zona Mrkalj, Ph.D. and Prof. Veljko Brborić, Ph.D.

Exhibition on Diplomatic Relations between Serbia and Bulgaria Opened

Source: Government of the Republic of Serbia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Serbia announced that, on July 24, an exhibition entitled “140 Years of Diplomatic Relations between Serbia and Bulgaria” was opened in Kalemegdan, organized by the Bulgarian Embassy in Serbia, the Archives of Serbia and the National Archives of Bulgaria.

The opening of the exhibition was also attended by the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia and the Minister of the Interior, Nebojša Stefanović, and the Bulgarian Minister of the Interior, Mladen Marinov.

On behalf of the Principal Deputy Prime



Minister of Serbia and Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić, the exhibition was opened by the Head of the Department for Neighboring and Southeast European Countries at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Slobodan Vukčević, and, on the Bulgarian side, by the Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria to Serbia, Radko Vlaykov.

Vukčević recalled that Bulgaria was one of the first countries Serbia established diplomatic relations with right

after the Berlin Congress. He expressed satisfaction with the quality of bilateral relations between the two countries today, which are at their historical maximum, characterized by intense political dialogue and a high degree of cooperation and trust.

Vlaykov pointed out that the two countries are linked by a similar language, culture, tradition and the same religion, and that bilateral relations are based on common European values. The Ambassador conveyed the intention of the Bulgarian Government to continue to support Serbia on its path to EU membership.

Jewish Community

A Faction of the Jewish Municipality of Belgrade Protested In Front of the Ministry of Justice

Source: N1

The Jewish Community of Belgrade (JOB) faction, led by Rabbi Isaac Asiel, protested in front of the Ministry of Justice on July 23, demanding that the Ministry act in accordance with the law and register Alexander Jinker as the president of the organization instead of Danilo Medić.

“Under the Law on Churches and Religious Communities, which guarantees the autonomy of deciding who our president will be, we, on December 2, 2018 and March 17, 2019, dismissed Danilo Medić from the position of JOB President because of the non-transparent disposal of funds,” Asiel said during the protest.

He pointed out that the Ministry of Justice had twice refused to enter the new president in the official registry, although it had been more than 60 days after his election, and the law provides that the new president is automatically considered as officially registered after the expiration of 60 days.

Asiel added that the work of the congregation was completely blocked because the newly elected president was not registered in the Register of Churches and Religious Communities.

“We came to raise our voice and call the Ministry to do its job and respect the law that provides for our autonomy and the right to decide who our president will be. The Ministry has put

itself in the role of an arbiter, it is as if a patriarch would have informed the Ministry that he had elected a bishop, and then the Ministry asked the bishop what he thought of it,” Asiel said.

The organization handed a leaflet to the Ministry of Justice stating that they condemned the Ministry’s attempt to deprive the religious community of its autonomy, in support of the ousted administration and interference with the community’s internal affairs.

Rabbi Asiel read the 130th Psalm, which he said to be read on such occasions, and announced that a protest would be held daily in front of the Ministry of Justice in the coming weeks.

Cooperation Agreement between the Office for Roma Inclusion, REF and VRCD Soon to Be Signed

Source: Roma National Minority Council

On July 23, the Director of the Office for Roma Inclusion, Miloš Nikolić, and the representative of the Roma Educational Fund, Aleksandar Jovanović met again at the premises of the Office for Roma Inclusion in Novi Sad. As in previous meetings, the promotion of the education of Roma students was on the agenda.

An agreement was reached to sign a cooperation agreement between the Office for Roma Inclusion, the Roma Educational Fund and the civil society organization Vojvodina Roma Center for Democracy at the end of August, with aim to strengthen the joint en-



gagement of these institutions and organizations in finding the most effective way to improve the position of the Roma community in Serbia, especially in the fields of education and employment.

After the meeting, in his statement for the Decade of Roma Inclusion newsletter, Nikolić said he was very pleased with the agreement reached and that the Office would be happy to partner with the Roma Educational Fund and the Vojvodina Roma Center for Democracy in all future projects related to employment and education of young Roma men and women. He added that he expects other relevant local, provincial and state institutions as well as civil society organizations to join such actions, noting that the Office for Roma Inclusion will provide all necessary logistical and legal assistance in the implementation of the agreed activities.

Nine Apartments for Roma Families in Novi Pazar

Source: Government of the Republic of Serbia

On July 2, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia and Minister of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, Zorana Mihajlović, handed over the keys to social housing for nine Roma families in Blaževo, Novi Pazar.

Mihajlović emphasized that she is especially pleased, as a woman and mother, that 20 children will move into these houses. The ceremony was also attended by the Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia, Sam Fabrizi, Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, and the Mayor of Novi Pazar, Nihat Biševac.

“Together with the European Union, we are investing 9 million Euros for social housing in 11 municipalities in Serbia, home to 250 Roma children. There is future for these children and they are the ones that will always remind us that we are one people, that Serbia is the state of us all,” Mihajlović said.

She added that it was up to the state to

create the conditions for Roma children to be educated and then gain employment and that we all fight against discrimination in society.

“We are addressing the issue of infrastructure, we have enabled them to register, to educate, we have reduced the mortality rate of Roma children by 50 percent. Special attention should be paid to Roma women, as they are the most vulnerable category,” she said.

The Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia, Sam Fabrizi, said that the integration of Roma is at the heart of all EU activities and that so far EUR 11.4 million has been invested in Serbia and that another EUR 20 million is planned to be invested.

“The Roma are the largest minority in Europe, and they are the most marginalized. The EU is trying to contribute to the state’s efforts to address the issue of Roma integration into society, and this can be achieved through housing, education, health and employment. This project is a proof that we are working together not

only on paper policies, but through specific activities, too,” Fabrizi said.

Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, Suzana Paunović, expressed her gratitude to Deputy Prime Minister Zorana Mihajlović, assessing that the Ministry that she runs is a powerful engine that puts the wind in the sails of such projects. She also congratulated the town of Novi Pazar, because, as she said, it is an example of a local self-government able to recognize the needs of their fellow citizens and allocate funds for such projects.

According to the Mayor of Novi Pazar, Nihat Biševac, approximately Euros 600,000 has been invested in the implementation of the project for nine Roma families, as well as the communal infrastructure and pavement of the streets.

“Our goal is to improve the quality of life of all our fellow citizens, including the local settlements of Blaževo. We want them to integrate as much as possible into society and to use these apartments in health and well being,” Biševac said.



Centar za istraživanja migracija
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