

**Paunović: We Are  
Continuously and  
Consistently Implementing  
Measures That Are  
Improving Minority Rights**

**Sombor Finances  
Councils of National  
Minorities, One  
Million Dinars  
Earmarked**

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# **Minority News**

**August 2019**



## **Bošnjak: Legal Solutions Have Been Significantly Improved**

**Highest Amount  
Granted for Roma  
Culture**

**Slovak Folk Festivities: 100  
Years With the People, In  
the People, For the People**

# HIGHLIGHTS



## Sombor Finances Councils of National Minorities, One Million Dinars Earmarked

The City of Sombor will fund councils of national minorities, with a total of one million dinars allocated for this year. This is the first time that the work of national communities has been supported in this way and the conditions are met by the Hungarian, Croatian, German and Bunjevac minorities. Allocating funds to finance the work of national councils is a legal obligation, but few local governments have fulfilled it.



## A Book of Poetry by the Consul General of Bulgaria Promoted in Nishville

The collection of poetry "Hidden Senses" by Consul General of the Republic of Bulgaria in Niš, Edvin Sugarev, his first book in Serbian, was promoted on August 9, as a part of the literary program of the Nishville Jazz Festival. The Consul General of the Republic of Bulgaria further said that the book of poetry and its promotion in Nishville are a logical consequence of his many years of cultural cooperation with Niš, NKC and Nišville.



## Members of the CES "Carpathians" from Vrbas at the Ukrainian Lemko Culture Festival

On August 1, amateurs of the "Carpathians" Cultural and Educational Society from Vrbas traveled to Ukraine to perform at the 20th International Lemko Culture Festival "Bells of Lemko", held in Monastirsk from August 2-4. On the margins of the festival, the meeting of the Presidency of the World Federation of Ukrainian-Lemko Associations was also held.



## Saint Stephen of Hungary Celebrated

The formal ceremony, with the presence of Provincial officials and representatives of the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority, marked St. Stephen (István) of Hungary, the Hungarian national holiday, in Novi Sad on August 21. St. István is celebrated as the founder of Christianity in Hungary, the founder of the Hungarian state, and the first unifier of all Hungarians.

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## The Merge of the Traditional and the Contemporary

We can rightly say that August was full of events in which members of national minorities played a key role. Neither the tropical heat nor the vacations prevented them from devoting themselves to the organization of numerous events, thus marking their national holidays.

On the second weekend of August, the holiday was marked by the Slovaks in Bački Petrovac. This year, Slovak national festivities were dedicated to the centenary of their founding and the cultural and artistic program in the hall of the Slovak Vojvodina Theater was dedicated to the arrival of Slovaks to the Lower Earth. The presence of provincial officials, led by Provincial Prime Minister Igor Mirović, as well as the presence of the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Peter Pellegrini, testified to the importance of this holiday.

The same weekend was celebrated in families of Islamic denomination. Kurban Bajram was congratulated by the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister, and many ministers, who showed that all citizens of the state were equally important to them.

They also showed this at the celebration of the national holidays of Bunjevacs and Hungarians. The central celebration of Dužijanča Day - one of the four holidays of the Bunjevac national minority - was held on 15 August. The following week, the Hungarian national minority celebrated its holiday. St. Istvan of Hungary was marked by a formal ceremony in Novi Sad.

These manifestations, as well as many other events that are held throughout the year, send a clear message that members of minorities cherish the memory of their ancestors, their traditions, but also that they are oriented towards creating something new, contemporary. Numerous projects to be funded by the Budget Fund for Minorities also support this. Tradition cannot be escaped, however, we have repeatedly witnessed that tradition can also be presented in a modern way. By merging the traditional and contemporary minorities, they say that they are not "cocooned communities" that stick to the old, tried-and-true recipe, but that they are also turned to contemporary creativity, which, at least in our country, is not often tied to members of minorities.



and ONE newsletter for all

# LEGAL SOLUTIONS HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED

**T**he protection of the rights of national minorities is of particular importance for each country. Our country is making great efforts in this area, and special emphasis is placed on relations with neighbouring countries, with intergovernmental mixed committees playing a key role in this regard. Three intergovernmental committees are currently active: with Croatia, Romania, and Hungary, and all three are co-chaired by our interlocutor Ivan Bošnjak, State Secretary of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government. We spoke with Secretary Bošnjak about the results of the work of these bodies, as well as about the situation in the Bosniak National Council.



**Intergovernmental mixed committees on national minority issues, which exist as a mechanism to promote further minority rights in Serbia and rights of the Serbian minority in neighbouring countries, were quite passive in the past. However, the situation has changed significantly in recent years, the committees meet regularly, there are tangible results, and you are personally co-chairing all of these bodies. Can you tell us more about the work**

**of these committees and the most significant results that have emerged from this increased engagement in the previous period?**

Serbia has active intergovernmental mixed committees on national minority issues with three neighbouring countries: the Intergovernmental Mixed Committee with the Republic of Croatia, the Intergovernmental Mixed Commission with Hungary, and the Intergovernmental Mixed Commission

with Romania. There is also a signed agreement with the Republic of Northern Macedonia on establishment of such a commission, though its work has not been activated yet. Launching the work of this body is a task that is practically ahead of us, in agreement between the governments of Northern Macedonia and Serbia.

With regard to the first three Commissions mentioned above, they consist of representatives of Republic and Pro-

vincial bodies, which are especially concerned in their work with the issue of national minorities - mainly representatives of ministries and institutions dealing with education, culture and issues of religion and religious communities, as well as other organizations and institutions dealing with specific topics, such as the issue of restitution or the media.

The contents of the agreements differ slightly in the cases of the three neighbouring countries that are members of the European Union, as well as the convocations of these bodies. In addition to the representatives of the state authorities on both sides, there are representatives of minorities - Croat, Hungarian and Romanian on the Serbian side, respectively, as well as representatives of the neighbouring countries, and representatives of the Serbs who live there, on the other side. The results are specific and relate, above all, to the demands that representatives of respective minorities place on their government representatives. In communication and coordination, we strive to approach these requirements with the utmost care and, where necessary, adjust or change regulations or, as it is most often the case, consistently apply existing legal solutions. What is perhaps most interesting to your readers is the announcement that, in accordance with the conclusions and recommendations that our Intergovernmental Joint Committee with the Republic of Croatia has made, bilingual signs will be posted at the entrance to populated places in Croatia, inhabited by the Serbian majority. I think that this will be one of the greatest achievements, in addition to improving the regulations regarding the organization of national councils of Serbs locally and at the county level in Croatia, as well as improving the legal framework and school curricula regarding what Serbian students learn in the Republic of Croatia.

When it comes to the other two neighbouring countries, with them, you will admit, we have far better bilateral and political relations unburdened by the aforementioned crucial and essential issues, because there is a historical distance that is much more favourable to promotion of bilateral relations at the

moment.

There are virtually no major problems with Romania and the Romanian national community in Serbia, except for individual issues related to the implementation of regulations in the field of education in Eastern Serbia, as well as the possibilities of information in Romanian, which we, in agreement with local authorities in that part of Serbia, have most satisfactorily resolved. What will be of interest to the Serbs in Romania, according to the information I have regarding the announcement of the agenda of the next session of the Commission, is certainly the further possibility of using Serbian language and script in everyday speech and communication, the issue of restitution of certain assets and buildings that were significant for the Serbian community in Romania, further networking and increase of opportunities to cultivate Serbian tradition and culture, both in Western Romania and the Romanian part of Banat, as well as in the part along the Djerdap Gorge.

As for the work of the Intergovernmental Mixed Commission with Hungary, the last session was held three years ago at the time of the migrant crisis. At that time, various topics related to security were tackled, and we expect that, following the national councils elections in Hungary, slated for this fall, a new dynamic will arise and that the Commission will continue its work in the best interest of the small Serbian community in Hungary.

What will be our priority, as representatives of state bodies of the Republic of Serbia, is to improve the specific position of members of certain minorities in agreement with the neighbouring countries, but also to take into account the Serbian people who traditionally historically live in our neighbouring countries in order to facilitate their access to the institutions of the Republic of Serbia, including their citizenship applications, and to strengthen their contacts with the country of origin.

**After a pause of almost 3 years, a meeting of the Intergovernmental Mixed Committee on National Minorities of Serbia and Croatia was held**

**in 2018, in which you participated as the co-chair of the Serbian side. How would you assess the position of Serbs in Croatia today? What are the key issues you have faced when it comes to protecting their rights? What do you think needs to be done to solve the problems that have been recently updated?**

We have held two sessions with the Republic of Croatia in this format in the last two years and we have now entered the rhythm of regular meetings. On our part, certain demands of the Croatian national minority were outlined. We also had a great deal of support from President Aleksandar Vučić himself, who, after his visit to Zagreb in early February 2018, has continued to meet regularly with representatives of the Croatian minority, and, with this dynamic, we have resolved the open issues. What certainly strains bilateral relations with the Republic of Croatia are the rights of Serbs in Croatia, heightened hate speech and historical revisionism, which are increasingly heard in the Croatian public in relation to the Independent State of Croatia and the tragic role that it played in the Second World War, from 1941 to 1945, when genocide was committed against Serbs at over 55 camp sites.

There is also the legacy of the last decades of the 20th century of the unpleasant experience we had with the Republic of Serbian Krajina. This burdensome moment after 25 years is further amplified at certain times of the year when certain holidays and so-called military victories are celebrated on the one side, be it the Operation Flash or the Operation Storm, while on the other, Serbs in Croatia perform religious rituals and commemorate all the victims. Today in Croatia, you can hardly see the representatives of the Serbs in the media, except in negative political context or as a subject to criticism.

Today in Croatia you can hardly recognize the significant contribution that the Serbs have made in these areas through history in culture, economy, preservation of tradition ... This is either not acknowledged or turned into some kind of daily political campaign

that does not in any way benefit our people living in Croatia. What is also significant is that, thanks to the hard work of both this Commission and the political representatives of the Serbs in the Croatian Parliament and all levels of government, the living conditions have improved to certain extent. Some Serbs are returning to the villages, which were depopulated during and after the conflicts, and they are finally getting now, in the second decade of the 21st century, electricity and a decent asphalt road. This is, on the one hand, an encouraging development, while, on the other, it indicates how difficult the position of Serbs in Croatia is, including the inability to find work within the public sector and the failure to implement what the laws of the Republic of Croatia provide. We address these issues very actively, in addition to attending significant dates for the Serbian community, such as the celebration of the 21st and 22nd anniversary of existence of the Joint Council of Municipalities (ZVO) in the Danube area, as well as those relating to the past of the Serbs, tragic moments that occurred in the former Yugoslavia. The presence of representatives of the Republic of Serbia at such events gives the opportunity for the Serbs to be more active in their demands, but it also gives us the additional energy to have enough strength and perseverance in these day-to-day affairs to continue to fight for the realization of everything we want for our compatriots. Lastly, I would like to note something that is certainly a positive trend - the economic cooperation. Namely, in contrast to all the daily political and often burdensome events in the public, be it the outbursts of particular fan groups or right-wing organizations, or the iconography that appears in public, on the other hand, we have positive developments regarding the economy and cooperation of different economic entities, including striving to attract jointly investors from third countries. Due to its good geographical position, Croatia's membership in the European Union and the good contacts that Serbia has in other parts of the world, some companies are opting to open their facilities both in Serbia and Croatia. This is something that indicates that

we will still have a positive trend in the development of our relationships, and I think these positive examples should be highlighted as much as possible. There are certainly appropriate sanctions that should be applied to negative incidents and behaviour. Undoubtedly, both societies are getting closer to each other, whether it is popular music or tourist potentials, where Croatian tourists are increasingly present on the territory of Serbia, with the opening of different air routes and the increase of all other traffic, as well as the number of job seekers in Croatia. I think this still gives hope that our relations will get better in the future.

**As the Secretary of State of the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government, you are in daily contact with representatives of the Croatian National Council in Serbia. Do they have any objections to the existing legal solutions and what constitutes an obstacle for them in exercising their rights, which are under the jurisdiction of the national minority council?**

Legal solutions have been significantly improved in Serbia in recent years. The Sector for Minority Rights and Freedoms in our Ministry, with the support of all three ministers in the previous three governments and, I would say, the commitment of the entire political leadership of Serbia, has been able to significantly reform the area of minority rights. All legal solutions, which were identified as insufficient or inadequate in the previous period, have been significantly improved by amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities and the Law on the Protection of Minority Rights and Freedoms, ratified in 2018. This has also been confirmed by our international partners' evaluations. And I would also say that minority representatives, including the Croatian national minority, who directly participated in the work of the working bodies, can be satisfied with the legal solutions. What is insisted on today is the full implementation of individual solutions as well as the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Mixed Committees. Everything related to education

has been resolved in the legislation, the Croatian Language Department has been opened at the University of Novi Sad, and what is left to be done now is to adjust other legal documents to ensure that, for instance, a teacher diploma acquired at this Department is fully accepted and implemented in Serbia's education system. The Croatian National Council, i.e., the National Council of the Croatian National Minority, in agreement with the representatives of the Republic of Serbia as their home country, intends to open an educational center in Subotica, which would cover children from preschool to high school age, and we currently work on this jointly. A new dynamic needs to be given to the working group in order to adapt the existing legal solutions to the needs of the Croatian national minority. What we are really pleased with is the significant increase in the number of students enrolled, despite the overall decrease of the number of children in primary and secondary schools. In accordance with their wishes, children have the opportunity to be educated in Croatian in vocational secondary schools, such as the Medical High School and the Electrical Engineering High School in Subotica. What lies ahead is the direct support of local self-governments to the work of national councils, and we, as the Ministry, have already made a recommendation that municipalities and cities in which members of national minorities, including the Croatian national minority, reside, earmark funds for work of national councils in their budgets for 2020, according to the number and national structure of citizens in their territories, This is what we will work on together in the future.

**You have repeatedly pointed out that minorities in Serbia enjoy a high degree of protection of rights and that Serbia is a leader in the region when it comes to legal solutions concerning minorities. Can you draw a parallel between the protection of minority rights in Serbia, on the one hand, and the Serbs in the countries of the region, on the other?**

I know that the Serbian people, especially in the countries of the former

Yugoslavia, have different experiences that they went through. I will start with Slovenia, where Serbs are not recognized as a national minority, but only have the opportunity to organize themselves into different associations of citizens who are most often affiliated with the church and do not enjoy any other kind of legal protection. In contrast, Slovenians in Serbia have their own national council and the possibility of direct representation in both social and political life. In Croatia, as it is well known, there are many issues that have not yet been resolved in regard to the Serbs, whether it is the official use of language and script, or the possibility and visibility of Serbs in the media. Certain cases of direct violence indicate that these rights are being inadequately exercised, despite the fact that Croatia has in some way - in its Constitution - rounded up the issue of having Serbs and other national minorities represented throughout different levels of government. However, these rights have not yet been fully implemented. Since the 2011 elections, all guaranteed seats have been filled, but in many cases, at different levels of government, there is still no full cooperation with Serbian representatives. Their role is often reduced to either the area of minority rights or completely excluded from decision-making, which is what bothers Serbs the most in Croatia today, apart from a strong right-wing turn and finger-pointing at the Serbian community when it comes to all other problematic issues within the Republic of Croatia. In recent months, Montenegro has also been a negative example of the exercise of Serb national rights. They are left out of the Montenegrin legal and constitutional system because they outnumber the percentage of the population that Montenegrin legislation recognizes as a national minority. At 30 percent, Serbs represent a significant population, not to mention the use of the Serbian language, which is used by over 60% of Montenegrins today. This is something that has been really been straining our relationships lately. An attempt is made to draw a parallel with the use of the Montenegrin language in the territory of the municipality of Vrbas, where, of the

interviewed inhabitants, only 0.02 percent use the Montenegrin language. I think that, in the future, it will really take a lot of work, not only with Montenegro, but also with the Republic of Northern Macedonia, Albania ... And as for the other neighbours, EU member states, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, the experiences are different. In direct contacts, we receive really positive signals from the representatives of the Serbian minority and we think that, to some extent, we might consider applying some examples of the exercise of minority rights in these countries, too, while, in return, we also believe that the legal solutions made in Serbia can be a good example for our neighbouring countries, which are members of the European Union.

**On August 14, 2019, the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government issued a notice of termination of office to members of the Executive Board of the Bosniak National Council, after considering the Initiative to Resolve the Status of Bosniaks and the Sandzak Region. What are the next steps when it comes to this problem?**

There are no further steps, at least as far as the Ministry is concerned, since, in this case, we have fully implemented legal solutions concerning both the authority of the Ministry in relation to national councils and the actions of national councils themselves. Namely, adopting an initiative such as the Executive Committee of the Bosniak National Council (BNV), i.e. the National Council of the Bosniak National Minority in Serbia, "produced" is a mere political pamphlet that has no place in the work of the Executive Board, and as it turned out, for which there is no will within the National Council for further consideration. It is important to note that, in the meantime, because of such an initiative, there was a personnel change at the level of the president of the National Council, as the previous president, Esad Džudžo, was dismissed because he did not agree that such an initiative would be part of the work of the National Council. The initiative itself, by its nature and in relation to the Ministry, is virtually null and void, as

it was brought about by a body which infringed its legal powers, which led to its dissolution. At the next Council meeting, when the initiative was to be confirmed, it was not even part of the agenda. Because of that, they made personnel changes and a new person was brought to head of the National Council. As the procedure was conducted in accordance with the law, the new President was registered in the Register of National Councils. The Executive Board has been dissolved and we expect that at the next session, the National Council will return to the framework of its lawful conduct, that is, continue to work in the interest of all Bosniaks living in the Republic of Serbia, and leave political topics, initiatives etc. to the political parties. I would like to note that political parties are additional opportunities within the Republic of Serbia, which representatives of national minorities, contrary to the other countries in the region, have - to channel these political issues through the work of their political representatives at all levels. When it comes to such initiatives concerning the constitutional order, they should be considered through the work of other bodies, and the work of national councils, as we have worked together so far, should be further depoliticized. Depoliticisation is an issue essential to the normal functioning of these specific bodies, as confirmed by the representatives of the Council of Europe and the various domestic and foreign experts who follow our minority policy. In the coming period, when it comes to four areas for which national councils are legally authorized to act and channel public policies - information, preservation of tradition and culture, official use of languages and scripts and education, we will work together, but politics should certainly remain outside national councils.

**Mr. Bošnjak, thank you for speaking for our newsletter.**

Thank you. I would also like to thank the Minority News Platform for regularly informing all our citizens about the activities of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.

# Paunović: We Are Continuously and Consistently Implementing Measures that Promote Minority Rights

Source: Office for Human and Minority Rights

**S**erbia is continuously working to improve the position of members of all national minorities living in our country, and numerous activities of the Government and other institutions, media, civil society organizations have contributed to raising citizens' awareness of the rights and obligations of members of national minorities, Suzana Paunović, Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights of the Government of Serbia, said when presenting the Eleventh Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Exercise of the Rights of National Minorities. The presentation of the report took place on August 5.

According to Paunović, 77 stakeholders 61 submitted their contributions for the Eleventh Report, accounting for 79% of the response.

She added that 50 local government units submitted their contributions and that 12 councils for inter-ethnic relations also participated in the reporting. The data received from local governments contribute to a clearer picture that the reports present, because they are best aware of the needs and challenges faced by members of national minorities locally, Paunović said.

Paunović noted that almost half of the national councils did not submit their contributions on the activities due for this reporting cycle and that this segment needs to be improved. She called on national councils to be actively involved in the reporting process, which entails their obligation to submit annexes to the reports.

The eleventh reporting cycle began on March 1 and lasted until March 22, 2019 and covered activities from January to the end of March this year.

Paunović stated 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 in the Action Plan have been fully implemented or are ongoing by the end of this report, Paunović concluded.

Representatives of national councils of national minorities, state and provincial bodies and institutions, the National Assembly, independent bodies, international and civil society organizations attended the presentation of the report.

## Sombor Finances Councils of National Minorities, One Million Dinars Earmarked

Source: RTV

**T**he City of Sombor will fund councils of national minorities, with a total of one million dinars allocated for this year. This is the first time that the work of national communities has been supported in this way and the conditions are met by the Hungarian, Croatian, German and Bunjevac minorities.

The seat of the National Council of the German National Minority is in Sombor and, despite its small number, the German national minority meets one of the criteria prescribed by the Law on National Councils for financing national councils from local budgets.

In addition to the German national minority, the Hungarian and Croatian national communities have also met conditions for financing national councils from the Sombor budget, as Hungarians constitute more than

10 percent of the population, and Hungarian and Croatian languages are in official use on the territory of Sombor.

"It is a modest amount and we will have to allocate it wisely. I suppose it will be education, information, language use and manifestations significant for minority communities," Sillard Janković, a member of the City Council for National Minorities, said.

Allocating funds to finance the work of national councils is a legal obliga-

tion, but few local governments have fulfilled this obligation. However, the City of Sombor has expanded the criteria for awarding funds. According to this extended criterion, the Bunjevac national community is also eligible.

Once the City Assembly has adopted the Decision on the Criteria for Allocation of Funds for Financing of National Councils of National Minorities, a decision on the allocation will be adopted. The national councils are obligated to use this money in the territory of Sombor.

# Highest Amount Granted for Roma Culture

Source: Politika

**I**n the recent call for proposals for allocation of funds from the Budget Fund for National Minorities, organizations that deal with the culture of the Roma national community received the highest amount. At the same time, the largest number of received project proposals targeted this minority group. The call was announced by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government in May this year, and the results have been recently presented. A total of 30 million dinars has been allocated, over 350 projects have been submitted for the competition, and the state will finance 91.

More than 10 percent of the allocated money, or about 3.3 million dinars, will be paid for the development of the culture of the Roma national community. With so much money, the state will support 10 projects from various civil society organizations and associations. There are 147,604 Roma in our country, and this community is the second largest according to the 2011 census. The Roma National Minority Council says that they did not have insight into the content of the projects that NGOs applied with.

“Our objection is that the line ministry did not follow the example of the Ministry of Culture to submit projects to us for an opinion. The results of the activities, if they are at all measurable by clear indicators, remain to be seen after the implementation of the approved projects,” Dejan Vlajković, Secretary General of the Council, says.

Institutions, associations, foundations, companies and other organizations founded by the councils of national minorities were eligible to submit proposals under this call, as well as other registered NGOs engaged in the protection and promotion of the rights and status of national minorities.

Immediately behind the Roma, in terms of the number of projects dedicated to culture, are the Slovaks whose five associations will be funded with 1.56 million dinars. The money has been allocated to the Museum of Vojvodina’s Slovaks, the Center for the Promotion of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, the Slovak Cultural-Tourist and Information Center, the Institute for the Culture of Vojvodina’s Slovaks, and the Slovak Cultural Information Center.

Ljibuška Lakatoš, President of the National Council of the Slovak Minority, says she is pleased with the results of the competition. “This incentive of the state is very positive and a great help in preserving culture and tradition. However, it would be very important now to encourage media outlets in minority languages to be able to



work and employ as many young people as possible,” she emphasized, stating that this is an area in which private investors do not want to invest.

It is interesting to note that, although they are the largest minority group, the Hungarians, with 254,000 members living in Serbia, have been allocated grants under this call for four projects only, worth a total of 1.15 million dinars. The same number of positively evaluated projects dealt with the Bunjevac culture. The project of the Cultural Association “Center for Culture of Bunjevacs” from Subotica was evaluated by the commission with the highest rating and received the highest amount of money, namely 728,000 dinars. With this amount, the state supported the organization of the recently completed celebration of the “Day of the Dužijanca”, marking one of Bunjevac’s national holidays.

The money for the three projects was given to associations that will deal with Ruthenians (678,000 dinars), Bosniaks (656,000 dinars), and two projects will promote the culture and customs of Jews, Egyptians, Ashkali, Albanians, Macedonians, Croats, Montenegrins ...

Montenegrins received 600,000 dinars for two projects, and one is being implemented by the Cultural Development Center from Vrbas “In Search for Montenegrin Relics”. The second is the project “Montenegrin Library and Reading Room”, of the Association of Montenegrins of Serbia “Krstas” from Lovcen, for which 200,000 dinars have been allocated. Publicist and researcher of the Montenegrin Diaspora, Nenad Stevović, who chairs this associa-

tion, says that the aim of the project is to sublimate contents from literature, science, art, history and other areas concerning Montenegro and the Montenegrin community in Serbia in one place.

Regarding the state’s attitude towards minorities, Stevović affirms that minorities are protected by law, but adds that the biggest problem of the Montenegrin community is “preventing it from essentially exercising the rights guaranteed to it by the Constitution and laws”.

“Formally, this looks fine, but in essence it is not. The situation with the Montenegrin language in the municipality of Vrbas best reflects this situation. Namely, only two municipalities in Serbia, Mali Idjoš and Vrbas, have fulfilled all legal requirements for the Montenegrin language to be introduced into official use. This was done on the territory of Mali Idoš municipality in 2010, and despite the imperative legal obligation, numerous requests from the Montenegrin community and a clear recommendation of the Ombudsman, the local government in Vrbas has avoided doing it for the whole nine years,” Nenad Stevović emphasized.

The majority of projects that have arrived at the recently completed competition of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government will aim to promote the culture of several minority communities or to present cultural diversity in Serbia. How much of this wealth is sufficiently illustrated by the fact that, according to census of 2011, members of 19 minority communities numbered more than 2,000. This list includes Ukrainians, with about 4,000 in Serbia, but no Russians. Nevertheless, the state will fund one project pertaining to the culture of Russians and Ukrainians. They are worth 150,000 dinars each. The same amount was earmarked for supporting the culture of Slovenians. It is a project of the Society of Slovenians in Belgrade, organizing an international exhibition entitled: “Red Cross Rešetars: A Century in Belgrade”.

# A Book of Poetry by the Consul General of Bulgaria, Edvin Sugarev, Promoted in Nashville

Source: [www.far.rs](http://www.far.rs)

**“I** have done a variety of jobs in my life that seem incompatible, but poetry is what makes up my essence,” Edvin Sugarev, Consul General of the Republic of Bulgaria in Niš, says. The poetry collection “Hidden Senses”, his first book in Serbian language, was promoted on August 9, as a part of the Nashville Jazz Festival Literary Program.

Sugarev says that he worked as a postman, journalist, and editor in his life, led a political party, served as a deputy three times in the Bulgarian Assembly, and also served



as ambassador to India and Mongolia. As a graduate philologist and doctor of literature, he has worked at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and at the Universities of Sofia, Plovdiv and the New Bulgarian University. He is also regarded as one of the best contemporary Bulgarian poets, as it is recalled in „The Hidden Senses“, published by the Niš Cultural Center (NKC), just before Nashville.

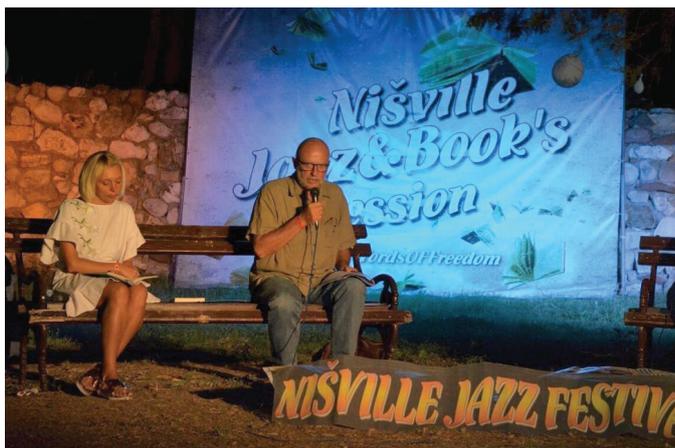
“Poetry cannot be explained or retold, and the poet, as one of my poems states, is an interpreter of God. Poetry and music have always been connected, so it is no surprise to combine my collection of poems with Nashville. This collection, which is one of 30 books of poems I have published, contains poems from several of them, which belong to different genres and styles,” Sugarev explained.

The Consul General of the Republic of Bulgaria further said that the poetry book and its promotion in Nashville are a logical consequence of his many

years of cultural cooperation with Niš, NKC and Nashville. NKC is helping to organize the Bulgarian Film Day in Niš, a manifestation that he supports. Nashville collaborates with the Bulgarian

tionized writing in his country since the 1980s. There is no taboo topic for him, and one important thought runs through poetry: everything is love. His poetry is calm and delicate, by no means cold and foreign, but rather thought-provoking. What you notice first is the appreciation of words and readers. He chooses words very carefully, even economizes with

them, but the poetry he creates in this way is very warm at the same time,” Verica Novakov, editor-in-chief of publishing at NKC said.



Novakov recalled that Sugarev had won numerous awards as a poet, and his poetry books had been translated into several languages. He also wrote one novel, as well as several books of essays and scientific monographs. He comes from an interesting family, of Bulgarian and Swedish descent, and his father was a “world famous violist”.



Jazz Festival and organizes his own promotion in Bulgaria, to which he has also contributed.

“Sugarev is a remarkable author who, with his group of friends, has revolu-

Sugarev added that he was dedicating the “Nishvillian” promotion of the poetry collection “Hidden Senses” to Zoran Pešić Sigma, editor of the Gradinarник Library, the book was published with. The poems were translated from Bulgarian by Velimir Kostov, the cover design was done by Victoria Lekova, and the book was printed by Niš SVEN.

# Slovak Folk Festivities: 100 Years With the People, In the people, For the people

Source: Provincial Government / Hlas Ljudu

**F**rom August 9 to 11, Slovak national festivities were held in Bački Petrovac. The Slovak holiday in Serbia was inaugurated by the Provincial Prime Minister Igor Mirović and the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Petar Pelegrini.

Congratulating the national holiday of the Slovak national minority, President Mirović recalled that, by the decision of the Assembly of Vojvodina, August 9 was marked as a date of special importance for the Slovak national community, and thus for AP Vojvodina and the Republic of Serbia as a whole, which confirmed mutual appreciation and understanding.

We have established, President Mirović added, a Provincial award in the field of human and minority rights, "Ljudevit Michatek", which will be awarded for the first time in December, to honor not only the future laureate, but also the great fighter for the rights of Slovaks and all other peoples - Ljudevit Michatek.

"Tonight, here in Bački Petrovac, in the most important center of the Slovak national minority in AP Vojvodina, we are also celebrating 100 years since the establishment of the Slovak grammar school and printing office, which shows

that the decision made 100 years ago to live together, on an equal footing and in unison, confirmed foundation that each identity be preserved," PM Mirović said.

"This anniversary is a testament to the preservation of our identity, which is deeply cherished in our hearts and it



is a testament to the vitality of our minority in AP Vojvodina and the Republic of Serbia. It is a wonderful feeling to be here in AP Vojvodina and see our mother tongue on all sides. I thank the Provincial Government and all institutions for supporting

the preservation and development of our identity," Slovak Prime Minister Petar Pelegrini said.

"On behalf of the City of Novi Sad and on my own behalf, I congratulate you on 100 years of Slovak folk festivities. We are proud of you for preserving your identity, language, culture, script and all that adorns AP Vojvodina and



Serbia. It is an honor and a privilege to be with you tonight, Novi Sad Mayor Miloš Vučević said.

The ceremony was also attended by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Provincial Government and the Provincial Secretary for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities-National Communities Mihalj Njilaš and Slovak Ambassador Dagmar Repčková.

During the weekend, numerous meetings and ceremonial sessions were organized - Slovak Heritage in Serbia, meetings of teachers, doctors, journalists, numerous exhibitions, concerts, as well as an indispensable art fair, which gathers many artists and masters of old crafts every year.



# Bunjevac National Day Celebrated

Source: Bunjevac Media Center

**T**he national holiday of Bunjevacs - the "Day of Dužijanca" was celebrated with the formal presentation of a loaf of bread made of a new grain. It was the most important part of the Day of Dužijanca festivities, celebrated from St. Mark Day, when the grain is blessed, to the Day of Dormition of the Holy Mother of God, when the thanks are given for the good harvest.

- I give you this bread made of new grain from our fertile field with a wish to celebrate Dužijanca for a long time - "bandašica" Dunja Mačković said, giving a loaf of the new bread to the President of Bunjevac National Minority Council, Dr Suzana Kujndžić Ostojić, while "bandaš" Vladimir Vuković, gave her a wreath made of wheat.

- As I was receiving this bread, I thought how much bread had been baked so far, how much grain was harvested, so that we, the Bunjevacs, and all the other fellow citizens would be here today in such numbers. How much effort, sweat and willpower have been put into cultivating this vast plain from what our ancestors found when they got here. Dužijanca emerged from all this - the Council's President pointed out, reminding that Bunjevac has been formally recognized as a language and added:

- I will do my best to make Bunjevac the official language in Subotica and in all places where our history is woven. After all, the first Statute of Subotica was written in Bunjevac, and now we can return our language where it belongs.

On behalf of the local government, Zargorka Panić, Assistant Mayor and City Manager, congratulated Bunjevacs on the national holiday.

- We gathered in the heart of Subotica, a place where all our history is woven and where the present and the future are intertwined. This is a traditional

celebration of pride and dignity, when we give thanks for the new grain and bread. We also celebrate the highest human values, diligence, hard work, perseverance, and respect for the special and particular is the cornerstone of the future and progress. Local self-government is always here to be a reliable partner and provide support, not only for the preservation of Dužijanca, but for everything that preserves tradition and culture, and Subotica is known for nurturing the diversity that brings us closer.

In his address, Prof. Miroslav Ilić, Assistant Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities, underlined the idea of Bunjevacs' struggle to preserve identity.

- This fight has been, and continues to be, a great challenge and temptation. The only ones who understand the gravity of these challenges and who have empathy for Bunjevacs are Serbs, because Serbs and Bunjevacs relate painfully to the experience of attempt-



ed violent assimilation. One such act occurred in May 1945, when the Chief Peoples' Liberation Committee, in the form of an order, annulled Bunjevac and Shock identity.

Provincial Secretary for Higher Education and Research, Prof. D. Zoran Milošević extended his congratulations on the attendees:

- Thank you for being together and for promoting something that is not only a tradition but also a modern Serbia. We



cherish the memory of our ancestors, we promote modesty, commitment and worthiness, all we need for the future. The values we create are to remain hardworking and humble, and secondly to establish a dialogue within ourselves, to have children together, to reflect together on values close to both young and old, to find peace in ourselves, as well as peace in relationships with others in our beautiful Subotica, Vojvodina and Serbia.

The attendees were also greeted by Dr Ivan Bošnjak, State Secretary of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.

- I would like to thank you for the invitation to attend the Catholic celebration of the Day of Dormition of the Holy Mother of God, and we invite you to the Orthodox celebration in Zrenjanin. This is exactly how we see this city, Bačka, Vojvodina and Serbia. We see this as something where we work together, create, and celebrate, but also protect each other so that we can last - Bošnjak added.

After the welcoming speeches, the cultural and artistic program featuring Bunjevac folklore was performed by BKC "Tavankut", PG "Kolo" Tompa, GKUD "Sombor", KPD "Jedinstvo - Egység", OKUD "Mladost", KUD "Aleksandrovo" and KUDZ "Bratstvo", while Katarina Novaković performed an old song "groktalica". The celebration was concluded with a traditional Bandaš kolo dance, joined by all who observe Bunjevac customs.

# Saint Stephen of Hungary Celebrated

Source: Hungarian National Minority Council

Photo: RTV Pannon / Magyar szó

**T**he formal ceremony, with the presence of Provincial officials and representatives of the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority, marked St. Stephen (István) of Hungary, the Hungarian national holiday, in Novi Sad on August 21. St. István is celebrated as the founder of Christianity in Hungary, the founder of the Hungarian state, and the first unifier of all Hungarians.

Saint Stephen (István) of Hungary, whose name at birth was Vajk, belonged to the Arpadovic dynasty. By receiving the royal crown from Pope Sylvester II in 1000, the Christianization of the Hungarian people began. This year is also celebrated as the beginning of the birth of the modern Hungarian state. After his death in 1083, he was canonized and since then, August 20 is celebrated as the day of Saint István and the national holiday of all Hungarians.

“Nearly a millennium ago, the dynasty personified by Saint King István struck the foundations of Hungarian statehood. Later, the Serbian Nemanjić dynasty did the same thing. That is why it should be mentioned today that at that time our dynasties often permeated themselves, being on the same Christian side at crucial moments. There were many examples of such a relationship in the later period. A month ago, Presidents János Áder and Aleksandar Vučić in Zemun unveiled a monument to the common

hero, Hunyadi Janos or Janko Sibinjanin,” Igor Mirović, the Prime Minister of the Provincial Government said.



The Provincial Prime Minister emphasized that there are common values that unite the two peoples and said that the path of cooperation and mutual support is the way to go.

“We celebrate this holiday in the context of the extraordinary relations of our two peoples, the extraordinary relations of Serbs and Hungarians, and to emphasize the pride that all of us here belong to

the generation of politicians, but not just politicians, who had the wisdom, courage and determination a few years ago to confront all, often very painful, historical truths that have plagued our relationships for decades. I put a point here in the past and continue on about the future,” Mirović said.

Congratulating the holiday to members of the Hungarian national minority, the President of the National Council of the Hungarian National Minority, Jene Hajnal, said that the holiday

was part of a debt to King St Istvan and thanked everyone who recalled that great statesman, who laid the foundations of Hungarian statehood.

The ceremony featured the actors of the Hungarian Chamber Theater, the “Kapistran” Youth Choir from Novi Sad, as well as the folklore group of the Cultural Art Society “Sandor Petefi” and the “Fokos” Orchestra in Bečej.



# The First Step for Better Relations - Serbs in Kamenica Learn Albanian and Albanians Serbian

Source: N1

**K**amenica Municipality is located in southeast Kosovo. It has been known for ethnic tolerance for decades, and the story that follows shows an idea that can advance life together and encourage language learning to communicate better. The idea that Albanians learn Serbian and Serbs Albanian was conceived in the Kamenica Municipality.

Bojan Atmo teaches Albanian. Bojan, who is fluent in Albanian, teaches Albanian to his fellow Serbs. He says the course serves to make it easier for municipal administration workers to communicate with clients. He adds that others interested in attending the course have also come forward.

this today, despite so many media campaigns and I do not know how much pressure of high politics, and that they only focus on the things they need for daily life here," Bojan Atmo says.

Teuta Kastrati teaches Serbian to her Albanian colleagues. She says it is very important for the future of Kosovo to establish communication, especially among young people.

"Knowledge of the language is especially important among young people. During these 20 years, I can tell you that the youth in Kamenica municipality did not communicate, and the only reason was because they did not speak each other's language. This course helped a lot

is very important," Teuta Kastrati says.

How much did this course help the students?

"I work in a pharmacy, every fourth or fifth client is of Serbian ethnicity, and it has helped me a lot to communicate with them," Suna says.

"This course has helped us a lot in our daily lives to communicate with our neighbors, both in the street and in supermarkets. Also in the municipality, because they are mostly Albanians," Milan says.

"I would recommend it to everyone, the more we know, the better. This applies to any language, but we really need Albanian here," Vesna says.



"It was interesting that, in addition to the municipal officials, we had doctors and nurses, ordinary citizens, students, it was a very good response. I am glad that it is encouraging that people have accepted

because in my class I had mostly young people who are students and work and who need this language while working, because we know we live in a mixed environment, so communication of both languages

Kamenica Mayor, thirty-year-old Qendron Kastrati, is the youngest mayor of Kosovo and is the son of Isa Kastrati, a well-known dissident, fallen KLA fighter. He says this is just the beginning on the path to eliminating prejudice.

"This is one way, but we think it is only the beginning, because, in the future, it is very important that we start this project with the younger generations and at a time when they do not yet have prejudices about others," Kastrati says.

Kastrati thinks it is time to acknowledge that there are more things that connect than divide people living in Kosovo today.

# Members of the CES “Carpathians” from Vrbas at the Ukrainian Lemko Culture Festival

Source: [www.nasemesto.rs](http://www.nasemesto.rs)

Photo: KPD Karpati

**O**n August 1, amateurs of the “Carpathians” Cultural and Educational Society from Vrbas traveled to Ukraine to perform at the 20th International Lemko Culture Festival “Bells of Lemko”, held in Monastirsk from August 2-4. On the margins of the festival,

the meeting of the Presidency of the World Federation of Ukrainian-Lemko Associations was also held.

In addition to domestic ensembles from Ukraine, the festival also featured guests from the Slovak Republic, Poland and Serbia.

Members of the “Carpathians” Cultural and Educational Society went to Ukraine thanks to the Union of Ruthenian and Ukrainians of Serbia and their partner in Ukraine, and participation in this festival has already become a tradition.



# Textbooks of Exceptional Quality

Source: Hrvatska Rijec

**T**extbooks for the second and the sixth grade of the Croatian language elementary school class were translated and sent to the Provincial Secretariat for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities - National Communities for approval, and Croatian National Council Education Committee Chair, Margareta Uršal, says they expect that the Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina ( PZV) will complete the necessary procedures in time for the textbooks to be available to pupils on September 1.



Earlier this year, the Croatian National Council, in cooperation with the publishing house BIGZ, initiated the procedure for approving a textbook kit for the subject Croatian Language for 2nd grade (A Letter by Letter No. 2, consisting of an Integrated Croatian Language

Textbook (1st semester) with Workbook and Integrated Working Textbook for the Croatian language (2nd semester) and for the subject Croatian Language and Literature for the 6th grade of elementary school (textbooks of the Croatian language for the sixth grade of elementary school, workbooks for the Croatian language, the Word Power and the workbook of the same name). These kits have been approved for publishing and use in class and have been evaluated by the members of the PSC Review Committee as textbooks of exceptional quality, Uršal points out.

## Certificates Issued by Croatian Language Department Coming Soon

**T**he Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia has informed the Croatian National Council that their initiative for recognition of certificates from the Faculty of Philosophy, which will be issued after passing four exams at the Croatian Language and Literature Department, has entered the authorization procedure. Upon receiving the expert opinion of the Institute for the Advancement of Education, the Ministry will inform the Council of the further action on the submitted initiative for amending / supplementing the regulations prescribing the level and type of education in primary and secondary schools.

The Council approached the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development with the initiative to initiate the procedure of recognition of the document from the Faculty of Philosophy, which will be issued after

passing four exams at the Croatian Language Department. For this certificate to be recognized, it is necessary to be part of the Regulations on the level and type of education of teachers and professional associates in primary school, the Regulations on the degree and type of education of teachers and professional associates in the grammar school, and the Regulations on the degree and

type of education of teachers in general subjects and vocational courses, professional assistants and auxiliary teachers in vocational schools (Medical and Polytechnic). Only when the amendments to these Regulations are published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia - Educational Gazette, will the certificate of the program be valid for students who have attended it.



# Balkan Festival of Vlach Culture and Customs

Source: Vlach National Council

**O**n August 3, the 2nd Balkan Festival of Vlach Culture and Customs was held, featuring an exhibition of paintings with the motives from the life of Vlachs, author Branislav Barbulović, and the defile of participants in the cultural and artistic program.

A roundtable on “The Life of Vlachs in the Balkans and Their Cooperation with State Institutions” was also organized. The round table participants were addressed by the President of the National Council of



the Vlachs of the Republic of Serbia, Novica Janošević, who expressed the expectation that the Vlach lan-

guage would be standardized in the coming period.

The Festival is organized by the “Vlach Unity Movement”, the Institute for Culture of Vlach, MZ Manastirica, the Cultural Club “Jovica Janković Turku” and sponsored by the National Council of Vlachs of the Republic of Serbia and the municipality of Petrovac na Mlavi.

## Festival of Original Vlach Songs and Dances

**F**or 14 years in a row, the festival of original Vlach songs and dances has been held in the village of Bučje near Bor. This year’s event was held on August 9, organized by the Bučje Local Community and KUD Stol. The event was also supported by the National Council of the Vlachs in the Republic of Serbia.

Opening the event, the President of the National Council of the Vlach National Minority, Novica Janošević, expressed his gratitude that “the Council has the opportunity to help such events, to preserve our tradition, culture and customs. I would like to congratulate the President of the local community, his deputy, as well as all members of

the local community, of course, and the Mayor of Bor, for preserving our tradition and culture. According to the last census, 422 people have declared themselves as members of the Vlach minority, and I know for sure that there are many more, because the village of Bučje has over 800 inhabitants,” Janošević said.



# Nikolić: Integration of the Roma Community in Vojvodina Has Been Significantly Improved

Source: Roma Inclusion Office of AP Vojvodina

**T**he Provincial Government is committed to implementing policies in the area of the rights of all national minorities, especially the Roma community, the Director of the Office for Roma Inclusion, Miloš Nikolić, said in the meeting with Provincial Prime Minister Igor Mirović and provincial MP Jelena Jovanović, held on August 8.

In his address, Mirović emphasized the position and status of the Roma national minority in Vojvodina, and particularly noted the importance of education, employment and social policy. He said that these three segments need to receive the most attention, as they are the most important for the integration of this national minority.

The Prime Minister of the Provincial Government assessed that significant progress had been made in improv-



ing the living conditions of Roma in Vojvodina, and announced that, in the coming years, programs aimed at Roma inclusion in the society would be implemented.

Miloš Nikolić stated that, in order to achieve the essential equality of the Roma, in addition to the institutional support and political will, a certain degree of social solidarity is needed, and he especially emphasized that more work is being done on education and employment of the Roma community.

He also noted discrimination as another common problem faced by Roma.

“Combating Roma discrimination and creating conditions for access to the exercise of human and all other rights is one of our most important tasks, which we must work on together,” Nikolić emphasized.

Provincial MP Jelena Jovanović said she was very pleased with the implementation of measures in Vojvodina so far that aim to improve the situation of Roma, and added that this process will continue, thanks to the serious policy towards all citizens, implemented by the Provincial Government, led by PM Mirović.

The participants in the meeting also discussed the Office’s plans and budget for 2020, scholarships for Roma students, and activities related to the employment of members of this community.

## Hungarian Community

# More Books, Fewer Readers

Source: RTV Pannon

**T**he first Hungarian library established after the Second World War in Zrenjanin is 74 years old. It was the first department of the Hungarian Cultural Club “Petefi”, founded in May 1945.

There are many valuable books among the 13,500 titles. Book lovers at the local library of MKUD “Petefi” in Zrenjanin can choose between works of art, children’s literature, bibliography, encyclopedia. The library is open twice a week.

“I can say that the number of readers in our library has decreased, unfortunately. I have been in this library for 19 years. I used to tell the kids to get the book back after two weeks, because other kids are waiting for it. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case today,” librarian Edit Tabački says.

Mihalj Dani, a native of Torda, returned from Australia to spend his retirement days in Zrenjanin. He primarily loves world literature.

“I loved to read more than listen to the radio or watch TV. Everything was timed or thematically related. One could not choose too much what to look or listen to. And you can open the book nicely when you have the will, the time and the interest.”

Thanks to donations from Serbia and Hungary, the library has continued to expand. Most of the books are donated by Zrenjanin families. Lajos Jenovai, president of MKUD, says:

“Books are coming in safe hands, but we are not happy about the reason why they come to our library. The issue is



that Zrenjanin’s Hungarian families die and offspring, who no longer speaks Hungarian, bring books. The second reason is when they move abroad and in many cases their personal library reaches us.”

The library of the Hungarian Cultural Association “Petefi” in Zrenjanin has been operating continuously since its inception. This library has the most Hungarian books in Zrenjanin.

# Hungarian Reformed Church in Debeljača and Evangelical Church in Pančevo - Cultural Monuments

**F**ollowing the decision of the Serbian Government, the Hungarian Reformed Church in Debeljača and the Evangelical Church in Pančevo were granted the status of a cultural monument.

The Hungarian Reformed Church in Debeljača is the largest reforming temple in the region in terms of size and capacity. The construction was completed in 1838, and its present shape in 1903, when the dome was built. There are also mechanical organs in the church that were built 150 years ago and are used at worship on Sundays.

Debeljača, with about 5,000 inhabitants, is the largest settlement in the

municipality of Kovačica. By ethnic structure, just over half is made up of Hungarians, one third is made up of Serbs, with the remaining 15 percent are members of numerous minority communities.

The congregation of the Reformed Church in Debeljača, whose church now has the status of a cultural monument, has about 2000 members.

The Evangelical Church in Pančevo, which was also given the status of a cultural monument, was built between 1904 and 1906, in the same way as the church in Leipzig. It was built with the means and contributions of the citizens of Pančevo, of various religions, and

was a temple of Germans - Protestants, hence the locally inscribed name - German Church.

There are no worship services today, the building is neglected, the priest serves the mass in the auxiliary room, and the main building occasionally hosts cultural events, especially concerts. Eight years ago, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Pančevo requested a special protection regime for the church building, which is in the center of the city, and the latest decision of the Serbian Government creates formal conditions to support the restoration and preservation of these cultural monuments from state funds.

## Bosniak Community

# Dr. Jasmina Curić Registered as President of the Council in the National Minority Councils Registry

Source: BNV

**T**he Bosniak National Council today received a decision by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government authorizing the change of the name of the President of the Council in the National Minority Councils Registry.

The new President of the Council, dr Jasmina Curić, was elected at the June 24, 2019 session.

The Bosniak National Council, acting in accordance with the law, informed the Ministry of Public Administration of changes in the leadership of the Council. During the month of July, the



competent ministry was also sent a reminder note, as there was no response.

The Ministry's decision notes that the process of dismissing the former and electing the new president of the Bosniak National Council was carried out in accordance with the Law on National Councils of National Minorities and the Statute and Rules of Procedure of the Council.

The National Minority Councils Registry is kept by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, and the minister in charge is Branko Ružić.

# The Bosniak National Council Appeals to Independent Bodies

**T**he Bosniak National Council has appealed to the Protector of Citizens and the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality with the complaint on the conclusion of the Program Council of the Radio Television of Serbia, which rejected the request to form an editorial board in the Bosnian language.

The complaint states that the RTS Program Council, by denying the establishment of a Bosnian language editorial board, denying, at the same

time, the existence of the Bosniak mother tongue, violated the rights of members of the Bosniak national community guaranteed by the Constitution and the Law.

In its decision to reject the establishment of a Bosnian-language newsroom desk at the RTS, the Public Service Program Council grossly violated the principles of equal rights and obligations and severely discriminated against members of the Bosniak national community on grounds of nationality and language.

Establishment of a Bosnian language editorial desk at the RTS was requested on the basis of the Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities as well as the necessity for public interest in the field of information.

The Bosniak National Council reminds the public that the Croatian-language editorial desk at Vojvodina Radio Television has been operating and producing the program for nine years.

Slovak Community

## UNS: Slovak National Council Not to Interfere with Editing of the “Hlas Ljudu”

Source: UNS

**T**he Journalists’ Association of Serbia (UNS) supports the decision of the editorial board of the weekly in the Slovak language “Hlas Ljudu” to send journalist Juraj Bartoš to the event “Meeting of Journalists” in Bački Petrovac, despite the pressure and opposition from the National Council’s Information Committee, which is their founder.

A letter from the Information Committee of the National Council of the Slovak National Minority addressed to the editorial board of the “Hlas Ljudu”, which the UNS had insight into, requested Bartoš not to report from this event, in order to avoid “greater conflict between the two institutions” (cf. UNS: National Council and the editorial board of the “Hlas Ljudu”).

UNS points out that the sovereign right of editorial boards is to determine who will report from an event and that no one, not even the found-



er of the media, can suspend the rights of editors and journalists.

UNS has informed the editorial staff of the Hlas Ljudu that the interference in editing the newspaper in Slovak language has been intensified after the dominance in the National Council of the Slovak National Minority was given to the newspaper “Matica Slovaka” and members of the “Slovaks Forward” party.

UNS supports colleagues from the Hlas Ljudu, believes in their expertise and professionalism, and opposes political shifts and interference with editorial staff.

UNS recalls that the proposal for

the measures of the Working Group for the Development of the Media Strategy seeks to establish editorial independence of the media, founded by national councils of national minorities, which means, among other things, that without the consent of the editorial staff, they cannot named and dismiss editors-in-chief of the media.

Colleagues from the weekly Hlas Ljudu were also supported by the Independent Journalists’ Association of Vojvodina, which condemns any threat posed to journalist Bartoš by the chairwoman of the Information Committee of the Slovak National Minority Council



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