



### Promoting Human Rights and Minority Protection in South East Europe

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### SMALL GRANTS UPDATE (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), FEBRUARY – JUNE 2015<sup>1</sup>

*The Project activities in the selected municipalities in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” are generally progressing according to the plan. Municipalities Saraj Skopje and Tetovo primarily directed their work on the organisation of meetings and round tables with members of the Commissions for inter-community relations (CICR). Municipalities of Staro Nagoricane and Krushevo are implementing activities aimed to preserve minorities’ cultures such as organizing folk Serbian dances, making folk costumes and opening of “Vlach traditional house”. Centar Zupa municipality is finalising the reconstructions of a space designed for retirees.*

<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that the political situation in the country caused by the recent incidents in Kumanovo could affect the implementation of the projects’ activities in some municipalities.

## Center Zupa Local Self-Government

Theme covered: Effective participation

Affected minorities: Albanians, Turks, and Macedonians

The project aims to establish an elderly corner that will improve the social life of the elderly population in the municipality and strengthen the inter-ethnic relations among different ethnic communities. Currently, the nearest cultural association is situated 15 km away from the municipality.

Retirees held the first founding meeting and expressed their intend to create a new association and separate from the Retirees Association in Debar to which they currently adhere and pay tax. They have met twice at the municipality

premises to discuss the future project activities. The municipality plans to complete the work in a space designed for retirees in the coming period. Procurement of the equipment planned for implementation of project activities is in progress.

## Krushevo Local Self – Government

Theme covered: Culture

Affected minorities: Vlachs

The project idea is to promote the Vlach language and culture by creating a traditional Vlach living room with traditional cultural items and costumes; hire vocal and instrumental bands to perform traditional Vlachs' music; and publish educational materials to be used in the local primary school.

The Project activities in Krushevo are progressing according to the plan. A call for applications for the implementation of the research was completed and the selected researcher carried out his first assignment. Negotiations on the development of promotional materials on Vlach culture are under way (a graphic design artist compiled models of the Vlach costumes) and the procedure for the selection of interpreters from Macedonian to English and Vlach languages is in progress.



The traditional Vlach room was fully equipped with traditional items and was officially open by the Mayor of Krushevo on 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2015. A number of Vlach families from the municipality,



representatives of local institution as well as guests from neighboring municipalities attended the event. The Ambassador of the Republic of Romania joined the opening ceremony as well. The event was covered by TV reporters from Macedonian National Television, 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The working hours of the “Vlach Room” are from 10 am to 2 pm and from 4 pm to 8 pm every day.

In addition, the Municipality is planning to organise Days of Vlach Culture on 26-27 July 2015.

## *Saraj Skopje Local Self –Government*

Theme covered: Effective participation

Affected minorities: Albanians, Bosniaks

The project aims to enhance the capacity of the Commission for inter-ethnic relations (CICR) to actively convene, participate in the work of the municipality and implement projects that improve inter-community relations. Proposed project activities will provide means and mechanisms for regular meetings of the CICR, develop 2 specific projects ideas and strategy for the CICR.



Based on the project's activities Saraj Skopje Municipality has made changes in the Statute related to the establishment of a Commission for inter-community relations (CICR) and started to conduct research on positive cases of CICR work across the country. The first round table was organized and representatives from different ethnic groups were present: Roma, Macedonians, Albanians and Bosniaks. A preliminary meeting between representatives from Saraj Skopje and Gjorgji Petrov municipalities was held. This

official meeting between the mayors of the two municipalities was seen as a gesture of reconciliation due to the ethnically motivated murder that occurred in one of the municipalities. The Municipality Mayor invited COE Secretariat to assist the meeting as well as COE and EU senior officials to give their contributions. It was announced that a special attention will be paid to joint activities for young people from both municipalities in order to prevent possible conflicts in the future. As a result, on 30 May 2015, Saraj Skopje municipality organized "School Olympic Championship" for pupils from Sisevo, Matka and Ljubin primary schools gathering young people of different origin: Macedonian, Albanian, Bosnian and Roma. On 5-7 June 2015, the municipal Task Force has also organized a training for the members of the CICR, which took place in Struga,

## *Staro Nagoricane Local Self –Government*

Theme covered: Culture

Affected minorities: Serbs

The project objective is to establish a Cultural Community Center aimed to cultivate the traditional values of the Serbian national community and produce and sale souvenirs. The municipality is willing to employ several persons in the Center and thus ensure sustainability of the project.

On 19 March 2015 Municipality of Staro Nagoricane established a Cultural Folk Ensemble and signed a Memorandum for cooperation with "Srpski Vez" Ensemble from Kumanovo. On 20 March 2015 the Municipality announced a Call for offers for a Folk dances course and engaged a choreographer to lead the course. On 24 March the first training was organized for more than 100 children from neighboring villages. As planned, the municipality purchased two industrial looms and sewing machines and



created a workshop at the municipal premises. Four women, selected through a public announcement, will be trained to make the costumes for the children of the folk society. On 21 April 2015 the Loom Workshop was officially opened in the presence of members of the Secretariat, municipal mayor, local officials and more than hundred children from neighboring villages. On that occasion, the aforementioned children, members of the local folk club "Srpski vez" performed traditional dances.

## *Tetovo Local Self -Government*

Theme covered: Effective participation

Affected minorities: Albanians, Turks, Roma, Serbs, Bosniaks, Macedonians

The project aims to work towards inclusion of all ethnic communities in the decision-making process at the local level through stipulation of successive continuity in the work of the Commission for inter-ethnic relations (CICR). Proposed project activities will include research, drafting policy papers and CICR strategy, study visits, capacity building of CICR members and organization of a conference.

The Municipal Task Force from Tetovo Municipality successfully organized two meetings with representatives of the Commission for Inter Community Relations (CIRC) to discuss its status and ongoing issues at local level. In order to review and analyze the current situation with the municipal CICR, an external consultancy organization was engaged in accordance with the activity plan. The selected organization -ISKAM- has not been formally contracted due to technical obstacles. A tribune -

interaction with the citizens was organized on 23 April 2015 and gathered heads of political groups of the municipal council, representatives of local political party affiliations, representatives of local religious groups and representatives of local NGOs. The key speaker in the tribune was the head of the Municipal Council of Tetovo, while other speakers included a CICR member and a representative of the largest Roma community NGO "Sonce". The event was moderated by the head of the CDI.