

On the Road to EU

2021

- The ninth Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) of the EU Committee of the Regions and Republic of Serbia was held, co-chaired by Niš City Mayor Dragana Sotirovski, together with Franz Schausberger from Austria. JCC worked in two sessions. The topic of the first session was the involvement of local and regional authorities in Serbia's EU accession process, and the second session discussed environmental protection, climate action and energy. Participants agreed that Serbia has made progress between the two EU reports. The latest EU annual report on Serbia's progress in the European integration process, on the rule of law, the fight against corruption, the improvement of the business environment, the green agenda, and public administration reform was analyzed. The expansion of the TAEX program to local and regional authorities in Serbia was also discussed. State Secretary of the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government Čedomir Rakić, the representatives of Niš, Čačak, Kragujevac, Vojvodina, the representatives of the EU Delegation to Serbia, the Rapporteur of the EU Region Committee for the 2021 Enlargement Package spoke at this session of the Joint Consultative Committee.
- The Delegation of the European Union to Serbia presented the Annual Report of the European Commission on Serbia for 2021 in Niš. The most important conclusions of the European Commission Report on Serbia for 2021, which was recently published, were officially presented in Niš by Dirk Lorenz, the Head of the political sector of the EU Delegation in Belgrade. Lorenz presented to the

representatives of institutions, civil sector and local self-government the most important findings and comments regarding Serbia's progress in the process of European integration. Lorenz pointed out that the report represents a fair and accurate presentation of the situation based on facts. According to him, progress has been made in certain areas compared to the previous year, and there is still much room for improvement in the coming period. On this occasion, Lorenz reminded that Niš is a very important center, which is confirmed by the recent visit of European Commission President Ursula von der Layen, on the occasion of start of works on rehabilitating and modernizing the Niš-Brestovac railway and signing the contract for the first part of the "Peace Highway".

- Slovenian Ambassador to Serbia Damjan Bergant and Assistant Mayor for International Cooperation and Projects Jovana Mitic opened the exhibition by Slovenian designers "Future of Living" in Salon 77, organized in cooperation with the City of Niš, Gallery of Contemporary Fine Arts in Nis, Center for Creativity – Museum of Architecture and Design from Ljubljana, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and the Embassy of Slovenia in Belgrade. The entire project, created under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, is one of the major promotional events of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2021. Aimed at local and international presentation, the Made In Slovenia brand and modular exhibition showcases products by Slovenian designers that are sustainable, innovative, ingenious, clear, functional, socially engaged and to a large extent also produced in Slovenia. The goal of selection and the Made In Slovenia label of

excellence is to create a collection which will be recognized worldwide as an example of good design from Slovenia, promoting the principles of sustainability and contributing to the cooperation between the creative and economic sectors.

- The message that sport is equally important for everyone and that we are all equal in sports, was sent today from the center of Niš on the occasion of the European Sports Week. The match of basketball players in the wheelchair in 3 × 3 basketball, as well as the competition of passers-by and visitors in shooting for three points, free throws, shots from all over the field, as well as the special game “Road around Europe” were organized on the central town square. At the same time, a message was sent about the importance of inclusion and a society tailored to all. The event was organized by the EU Info Corner Niš and the Wheelchair Basketball Club Niš in cooperation with the City of Niš and the Faculty of Sports and Physical Education of the University of Niš. At the same time this was the end of the *Parainspired Campaign* that the EU Delegation in Serbia carried out in the previous period, providing significant support to the Serbian Paralympic Team and the performance of our Paralympians in Tokyo. The European Sports Week is traditionally celebrated throughout Europe in the last week of September, but it was postponed in Niš at that time due to unfavorable weather conditions.
- The City of Niš joined this year’s European Week of Local Democracy, from October 11 to 15, whose theme is *Environmental Protection: Local Communities Take Action* and refers to local activities on environmental protection, the fight against climate change,

strengthening resilience and working to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable and Resilient Communities) involving citizens. Climate change is one of the most important threats to modern society and has a direct and indirect impact on our communities and citizens. Responding to climate change requires immediate and effective measures at all levels of governance, with local and regional authorities at the forefront of reducing the negative impacts of environmental change in their communities. Plans to build resilience and strategies to tackle climate change are not as effective as they should be if they are not supported by citizens' efforts and adopted behaviors.

- The City of Niš, the Center for Civil Society Development Protecta and the Science Technology Park Niš organized the Round Table "Opportunities and Challenges for the Establishment of Energy Cooperatives in the Republic of Serbia". The Round Table was one of the events in Niš marking European Week of Local Democracy. The Round Table brought together representatives of local self-government, city institutions, business sector, public companies, civil society organizations, representatives of the university community. The organization of the Round Table was supported by Horizon 2020 mPOWER Project which focusses on how municipalities are managing the energy transition in a fair, clean and democratic way. Some European cities, particularly in Germany, Denmark and France, have made innovations in the energy sector management, from running distribution networks, supply companies, and renewable generation, to facilitating citizen participation processes, to sourcing public/alternative finance for energy projects. Other cities across Europe are exploring their options for municipal energy, and are looking to learn. mPOWER

maps existing municipal energy policy and identify innovations, as well as obstacles and barriers. Through city-to-city conversations best practices that have led to more equitable, just and participative energy policies are identified and shared. What energy cooperatives are, how to register them, what the experiences in Serbia and the region are, who benefits of these cooperatives, are just some of the issues discussed at the Round Table. The panelist with a lot of experience in this field focused on issues such as ensuring a market-sustainable system based on renewable energy sources, sustainable energy use, involving the local community in energy-related projects. The representatives of the only two energy cooperatives registered in Serbia, Ana Džokić and Dubravka Živković on behalf of the Energy Cooperative "Elektropionir" from Belgrade, and Slobodan Jerotić, the representative of the Energy Cooperative "Sunčani krovovi" from Šabac, addressed the gathering. Goran Čačić from the "Green Energy Cooperative" from Križevci shared Croatia's experiences, and Bojan Gajić, City of Niš Energy Manager, spoke about the capacities of the local self-government to help citizens switch to alternative energy sources. From the point of view of the business sector, Andrija Petrušić, the energy manager of the company "United Green Energy", spoke about the problems that arised in the purchase of electricity produced in this way and the challenges of commercialization of the use of alternative energy sources. Milan Stefanović, the representative of the Center for Civil Society Development Protecta, spoke about the role of civil society, networking of the sector and education of citizens. The representative of the RES Foundation, Jasminka Oliverić Young, drew attention to the issue of legal regulations, and professor of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Niš, Goran Vučković, spoke about the need for greater use of thermal energy.

Educational activities for citizens in the coming period regarding energy cooperatives and energy efficiency were announced at the occasion. The meeting was opened by Milan Randjelović, the director of the Science Technology Park Niš, where the round table was held. Science Technology Park Niš is the part of the EIT (European Institute of Innovation and Technology) Climate-KIC (Knowledge and Innovation Community) Hub working to accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon, climate-resilient society by building an active and vibrant ecosystem of professionals, businesses and citizens that will drive the shift towards a regenerative, circular society.

- Within the implementation of the Program for financing activities and measures to improve efficient energy use in 2021 and in order to achieve energy savings and its rational use, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the City of Niš and the Ministry of Mining and Energy provided 19 million dinars to co-finance energy rehabilitation measures for residential buildings, family houses and apartments on the territory of the City of Niš in 2021. The program under which these subsidies are provided envisages that the ministry and the local self-government provide half of the subsidy for each investment, and the owners themselves the other half. Citizens will be able to apply for the replacement of carpentry (2.4 million RSD) and for thermal insulation (4 million), as well as for the installation of solar collectors for heating sanitary water (1.2 million RSD). Housing communities can apply for carpentry replacement (6.4 million RSD) and for thermal insulation (5 million RSD). On the occasion of the Public Call for co-financing of energy rehabilitation measures for residential buildings, family houses and

apartments on the territory of the City of Nis for 2021, the City of Niš and the Office for Local Economic Development organized an Open Day at the City Hall. Open day was one of the events with which the City of Niš marked the European Local Democracy Week this year. During first hour about a hundred citizens came to get acquainted with the public invitation. Meeting the interested citizens individually during the Open Day was the opportunity to present the measures that are co-financed and detailed conditions for the distribution and use of funds; participants implementing energy efficiency improvement measures, the manner of their participation and role; the manner of providing financial resources, percentage of co-financing; clarifications of the application conditions for citizens and selection criteria; monitoring and reporting. Citizens' issues concerned property law, administrative and technical areas. The citizens not only asked, but also came up with concrete proposals so that the next public call would have simpler procedures, which is especially important.

- The City of Niš Youth Office joined the European Week of Local Democracy by organizing the podcast in accordance with this year's theme discussing the issues of environmental protection and what young people can do. Anastasija Milojić, a high school student, was the the guest. At her initiative a group of high school volunteers collected used plastic packaging under the slogan "Reduce Plastic, Change Drastically" at the Niš Fortress in September. The collected plastic was set aside for recycling, and the plastic bottle caps were donated to the association, which sells the collected corks to companies recycling hard plastics and buys orthopedic aids for people with disabilities. The

project was created as an epilogue to the training of the Camp of Young Leaders, of which Anastasija was a participant, with the objective to show in a simple and practical way how much change a recycled bottle can bring, and encourage fellow citizens to be more careful about the waste they leave behind, but also encourage young people to join such actions. During the podcast numerous questions arose, related to Anastasija's work, but also to the protection of the environment, numerous ideas came from the podcast itself. The basic idea is to organize the collection of plastics in the city on a monthly basis, to talk about sustainable development and environmental protection in schools, but also at faculties. It is very important for young people to get acquainted with the concept itself and to see the importance of preserving the environment. Anastasija also spoke about the problem of illegal landfills, as well as global warming. As pointed out on the podcast, little is said about global warming, especially among young people. It was suggested that City of Niš Youth Office should organize information sessions on the importance of preserving the environment, but also on the problem of global warming, on the importance of young people in the whole process.

- The agreement was signed on the construction of the first phase of the Peace Highway towards Merdare on the section Merošina – Merošina 1 and the beginning of works on modernization and rehabilitation of Niš-Brestovac Railway Corridor 10 was marked in the presence of Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Donje Medjurovo. Both important infrastructure projects are part of the EU's Economic and Investment Plan for the

Western Balkans and will improve connectivity in the region, but will also speed up ties with the rest of Europe via Corridor 10. Niš is becoming the most important crossroads between Serbia and the Balkans. The total value of the modernization of that section is 59.9 million euros, and 85 percent is financed from non-refundable funds provided from the IPA 2015 fund, and 15 percent from the budget of Serbia. This railway is part of the important Corridor 10, which connects Europe in the north-south direction, and the entire section will connect Belgrade with Preševo (border with Northern Macedonia). Investments will continue in the modernization of the railway lines between Belgrade and Niš with the support of the EU, the EBRD and the EIB, while preparations are underway for the rest of the railway corridor 10.

- The complete suspension of traffic and the closure of the streets in the city center, which were briefly occupied by cyclists, young football players, volleyball players, in order to promote a healthy lifestyle and draw attention to increasing air pollution, marked Car Free Day in Niš which is organized for the 15th time in a row. The City of Niš has implemented numerous measures to improve traffic, such as the construction of bicycle paths, the expansion of the pedestrian zone, and the planting of greenery. Significant funds have been set aside for the provision and equipping of cycling infrastructure to enable fellow citizens to use their bicycles in the prescribed manner. The city intends to set aside five million dinars for subsidies for the purchase of bicycles, with the goal of increasing environmental protection and reducing the number of vehicles on the streets. The installation of a “rent-a-bike” point, where citizens will be able to rent a

bicycle for free in accordance with their needs, is also planned. World Car Free Day aims to raise public awareness of the dangers of excessive environmental pollution, points out the increasingly serious climate problems and the growing damage done the ozone layer, as well as promote ecological and healthy lifestyles. Although it is only one day, Car Free Day aims to draw the attention to the burning problem of pollution, encouraging people to depend less on cars and try alternatives – walking, cycling or using public transport.

- European Mobility Week was marked in Niš this year with the idea of promoting sustainable means of transport and looking for innovative solutions for preserving the environment. The City of Niš, as a traditional partner of the EU Info Corner in marking the European Mobility Week, is one of the 26 cities and municipalities in Serbia that participated in this event with numerous activities. On Saturday, cycling fans of all generations took a bicycle tour from the main city square to Njegoš Elementary School and got acquainted with the basic rules in bicycle traffic. The City of Nis is working to improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists and plans to renovate and mark bicycle paths. An additional value for the promotion of healthy lifestyles was the opening of the doors of the National Museum, more precisely the site of the Skull Tower for all participants in cycling. By visiting and getting acquainted with the history of this monument the importance of preserving and nurturing the rich cultural heritage of Niš was pointed out. The tour ended at the training ground of the Elementary School Njegoš in Niš, where the youngest cyclists had the opportunity to learn the rules of cycling and win prizes. This year marks the jubilee, the 20th

anniversary of the European Mobility Week, under the slogan "Let's move sustainably!" Let's Stay Healthy!". This event aims to favor non-motorized modes of transport in cities over car traffic that uses fossil fuels, all with the aim of improving the quality of the environment in urban areas.

- City administration employees, workers in tourism industry and urban planners, together with Niš City Mayor Dragan Sotirovski, who is also the co-chair of the Serbian side of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union, met with colleagues from Bulgaria and Romania with whom they exchanged experiences on the role of local governments in the EU accession process. How to advance regulatory reform with special reference to ex-ante and ex-post analysis of the effects of regulations at the local level, all in line with the EU standards was discussed. There was special talk about how to connect the Danube tourist region with our city and region and how, in accordance with the open chapters, to follow all European standards.
- Niš City Mayor Dragana Sotirovski participated, in the capacity of the co-chair of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) of the Committee of the Regions of the EU and the Republic of Serbia, in the Enlargement Day organized by the European Committee of the Regions in cooperation with the Slovenian EU Presidency. The main topic was the role of regions and cities in the EU enlargement process and the sustainable recovery of the region. The panelists also discussed the green and digital transition in order to recover and strengthen resilience. As a panelist, the Mayor of Niš spoke about

the projects of Niš on environmental protection, the parts of the Development Plan of Niš 2021-2027 that relate to environmental protection, which occupies an important place in the negotiating chapters with the EU, the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy that City of Niš signed in

- Niš City Mayor Dragana Sotirovski addressed the members of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) of the Committee of the Regions and the Republic of Serbia as co-chair at the eighth meeting, talking about the importance of local and regional authorities in the process of Serbia's accession to the European Union. She pointed out the importance of the JCC as the only body that enables regional and local authorities to talk to colleagues from EU countries in the accession process, as well as the fact that the regional and local level should contribute to that process as much as possible. The local and regional authorities have the responsibility of promoting and explaining the European path of our country to citizens in local communities. Dragana Sotirovski will perform the duty of co-chair with Prof. Franz Schausberger, the president of the regional body with political responsibility in the election assembly of the State Parliament of Salzburg. The Mayor of Niš participated in the thematic session on sustainable recovery from covid together with regional and local authorities of Serbia. Ambassador and Head of the Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the EU Ana Hrustanović, State Secretary at the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government Čedomir Rakić, Head of Unit of the Directorate General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations Catherine Vendt, Member of the European Parliament and Permanent Rapporteur of the European Parliament for Serbia Vladimir Bilčik, also

took part in the meeting.

- Photo exhibition *Nišava – Sustainable River Future* was opened in the park on the Nišava riverfront. Twenty exhibition panels tell the story about the life of the city, its residents and the Nišava River in the course of history and today. A special section of the exhibition was dedicated to the future and the significance the wastewater treatment plant with the sewage system in Niš would have. Serbia, EU and Sweden will implement this investment together. The exhibition is a part of the “EU Green Week” marked this year from 29 May to 4 June throughout Europe with the same goal – to achieve “zero pollution” and preserve the environment. Most of untreated communal and industrial wastewater is directly discharged into the Nišava River and natural watercourses, which is one of the key factors of the environmental pollution. This exhibition draws the attention to the importance of wastewater treatment as a significant chance of recovery of the most important natural resource we have. The exhibition thus emphasizes the mutual impact of human activities and the Nišava River, reflected not only in the quality of public health, food and the living of residents of the City of Niš, but the entire Black Sea basin that the Nišava River flows into. The new wastewater treatment plant will reduce pollution, promote the quality of surface water and groundwater, improve the status of rural and urban sewage networks, all of which will have a positive impact on human health, flora and fauna, as well as the development of recreational and professional sports on the rivers. Sweden is supporting the Serbian Government and the City of Niš with EUR 1.3 million for the preparation of documents for the plant within the “Priority Environmental Infrastructure for Development

Project“ – PEID. The estimated value of the future wastewater treatment plant in Nis amounts to around 60 million euros. The construction of this plant is one of the largest and most important green investments in Serbia. Funds for construction works should be provided mostly by the European Union IPA, and the balance provided by the City of Niš and the Republic of Serbia through the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

- Niš City Mayor Dragana Sotirovski was unanimously elected co-chair of the Serbian side of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC). The co-chair of the Serbian side of the JCC is elected by the members appointed by the Government of the Republic of Serbia at the proposal of the authorized nominators. The JCC of EU and the Republic of Serbia is composed of representatives of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union and local and regional authorities of the Republic of Serbia. The JCC was established in 2014 to establish a dialogue and cooperation between regional and local authorities in Serbia and the CoR, as well as to prepare local authorities for participation in the CoR work after EU accession. The JCC meets twice a year, alternately, in Serbia and Brussels.
- As part of the celebration of Europe Day the EU caravan visited Niš. All interested visitors and passers-by had the opportunity to enjoy the numerous settings, take photos in their favorite European cities, virtually visit them and talk live with the people who are there. With the help of modern technology 27 video stories about EU support to Serbia were shown, and the caravan included the exhibition entitled *Growing Up Together*, which presented organizations and institutions from Niš

and the region that implement EU projects and have cooperation with the EU Info Corner. The celebration of Europe Day in Niš and the arrival of the EU caravan was also supported by the City of Niš, with which the EU Delegation to Serbia and the EU Info Corner Niš have a long and successful cooperation. Part of the caravan in Niš was an art installation by students of the Faculty of Arts in Niš, which is one of the three winners of the competition *Europe Is Here 2021* of the EU Delegation. Through interactive boxes, by scanning the pages, the exhibition presents the fundamental values and ideas of the EU and shows the works of 40 young artists from 23 different European countries. Artists from the ARTEF association in Niš have prepared a 3D image for the EU caravan called *Picnic* that connects different European countries, their culture and tradition, all through the prism of reminders of the development of environmental awareness and the importance of preserving the environment. For the end of the evening and the departure of the caravan from Niš 3D mapping was left on the walls of the Niš Fortress. A video was shown that talks about EU cooperation and support for Serbia and joint ventures that contribute to the economic development of our country and a better life for citizens.

- An exhibition on the occasion of five years of work of the EU Info Corner in Voždova Street was officially opened in the corner. Symbolically, on May 9, when Europe Day is celebrated, an exhibition was presented that includes the most important events and activities from May 2016 until today. For five years, EU Info Corner Niš, at a well-known address in the city center, have been actively working with citizens, providing useful information and implementing many significant

activities in southern and southeastern Serbia. In five years of operation, the EU Info Corner in Niš has organized more than 220 events, independently or in partnership with other organizations and institutions. The exhibition includes photos from workshops, forums, educational programs, study tours, visits by EU ambassadors and officials, social campaigns and other significant activities organized in the past five years.

- The project *EU for Natura 2000 in Serbia* starts with the *Healthy Nature for Healthy Life Campaign*. The goal of the project is to increase the awareness of citizens about the natural beauties of Serbia, but also to point out the importance of their protection. The bus campaign aims to show the citizens the incredible landscapes of Serbia and to emphasize the importance of biodiversity protection and nature conservation. The buses with the incredible landscapes of Serbia will be circulating for two months in Niš. The project also covers Belgrade and Novi Sad.
- On February 26, the annual coordination meeting of the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) was held, on the occasion of which the report was presented on the activities to mark this event in 2020, entitled *Local Democracy: Building Confidence; Co-designing Local Democracy with Citizens and Practicing Open Administration*. In the 2020 Edition, 204 local and regional authorities and their associations from 19 countries have participated in the ELDW, and a record-breaking number of activities, 508, have been reported. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, ELDW participants worked hard to enhance democratic participation and use their resources to keep citizens' safe and involved. Andreas

Kiefer, Secretary General of the Congress, Bryony Rudkin from UK and Mihkel Juhkami from Estonia, Congress Thematic Spokespersons on the ELDW, and Dmitri Marchenkov the Head of the Co-operation and External Relations Division. The activities of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, as the national coordinator of ELDW in Serbia, and the activities of 8 cities and municipalities from Serbia were presented by Djordje Staničić, Secretary General of the SCTM and Aleksandra Vukmirovic, Head of the EU Integration and International Cooperation Department. The meeting was also attended by the representatives of the City of Niš and City of Vranje. These two cities are this year's winners of the award – ELDW Partner Status.

- Niš and Vranje are the winners of the award of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe "Partner of the European Local Democracy Week 2020". The award is given to those local governments that, through their activities within the ELDW, have shown a special commitment to raising citizens' awareness on the topic of local democracy, and especially this year's theme Local Democracy: Building Trust. The City of Niš joined this year's European Week of Local Democracy with several activities. A campaign was conducted to raise awareness for the active participation of citizens (children and youth up to 35 years of age) in the preparation of the Development Plan of the City of Niš for 2021 to 2027 through social networks. As part of marking ELDW, a placemaking workshop was held on the topic – Nis on the River, as the initial activity of this planning process, with the aim of initiating participatory planning of the Nisava riverbanks in the city center with the participation of city representatives, academia, chambers institutions, residents, business owners, the owners of the houses and apartments in that part of the city. The technique of planning the construction of places with the aim of

activating open public areas was presented, and the Consul platform was also presented as a comprehensive tool for citizen participation in decision-making. Deputy Mayor Dušica Davidović held a presentation of good practice in the field of open administration, civic participation and e-democracy to students of the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade, at the event organized by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities on the occasion of ENLD.

2020

- With the performance *From Darkness to Support* on the main city square, the City of Niš marked the European Day for the Prevention of the Most Serious Forms of Child Abuse, with a special focus on the prevention of sexual violence. The City of Niš was the first city in Serbia to accept the Council of Europe document for stopping sexual violence against children, entitled *One of the Five* in The city has adopted a Local Action Plan to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect, which it has been successfully implementing together with the relevant institutions since 2014.
- The City of Niš joined this year's European Week of Local Democracy (EWLD) whose leading theme is Local democracy: Building Trust; Co-designing Local Democracy Together with Citizens and Practicing Open Government". The European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) is an initiative coordinated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. This pan-European event is targeted specifically at local and regional authorities (local communities, cities,

municipalities, provinces, regions). The general aim is to promote and foster democratic participation at a local level throughout public initiatives which involve citizens.

- Niš City Deputy Mayor and at the same time the deputy member of the Republic of Serbia delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Mrs. Dušica Davidović participated in the Forum on participatory democracy at local level organized by Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities at which she presented the experience and good practices of the City of Niš in the area of open government, citizen's participation and e-democracy to the students of Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade. Municipalities and cities are becoming increasingly aware that it is necessary for citizens to be involved in the permanent consultation process and in that sense the awareness of citizens in the local community must be raised, but the capacities of local self-governments for participation of citizens must be built. City of Niš tries to practice open government through various initiatives: open days for citizens at Mayor's Office, at all departments of the city administration and in local community assemblies, public hearings before the adoption of any strategic document, live broadcast of all the session of Niš City Assembly. When it comes to development of participatory culture among young people City of Niš has Youth Council (Youth Council is a mechanism that enables young people to take an active role in decision-making, as well as networking and cross-sectoral cooperation of institutions dealing with youth), Youth Office, allocation of the funds in the city budget for financing and co-financing of youth projects: supporting the young by supporting the work of

youth associations, in order to achieve the highest possible degree of connection between young people and local self-government. The participation of vulnerable groups in public life is secured through: Council of the City of Nis for work with persons with disabilities, allocating funds in the city budget for financing and co-financing programs of public interest implemented by associations-organizations of persons with disabilities in the field of social protection and protection of persons with disabilities in the city of Nis: strengthening the capacity of associations and organizations of persons with disabilities to implement programs; Commission for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities which monitors the achievement of gender equality, proposes activities and measures, especially those that implement the policy of equal opportunities at the city level. In the field of information dissemination and e-democracy: The City of Niš published a large number of data sets on the national open data portal realizing the value of opening data when it comes to quality decision-making and data-driven planning, as well as activating the vast practical, economic and creative potential of opening up a wide range of information and diverse data that the public sector collects and which in some ways has been “captured” making this data available in machine-readable form to citizens and the business community for the purpose of creating new opportunities for the development of the startup community, the economy and employment, as well as new values through new information, analysis and services. Thanks to the Open Data, City of Niš and City of Kragujevac became the first cities in Serbia to have public transport visible on Google maps. During the introductory panel, the participants were addressed by Djordje Stanicic, Secretary General of the SCTM, Tobias Flesenkemper, Head of the Council of Europe Mission in Belgrade, Sasa Mogic, Assistant Minister of State

Administration and Local Self-Government and Dejan Milenkovic, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade. The representatives of cities of Kovin, Veliko Gradiste, Sombor, Uzice, Nis and the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade shared their experiences in the field of local democracy during the panel discussion. The Forum was broadcast live on Facebook and Youtube.

- The awareness raising campaign for active citizens' participation in the preparation of the City of Niš Development Plan for 2021 – 2027 was launched through social networks, initially on Facebook and Instagram and later on Twitter and LinkedIn. The target groups of Instagram are children and pupils from primary and secondary schools, students and the young working population up to the age of 35. Facebook targets the young working age population (24-34) and the active working age population (34-65). Twitter and LinkedIn will include students and the entire working age population. The posts on social networks will present the ways of participation for the citizens and possibly some short online surveys on Instagram and Facebook. Here the citizens will be able to get information about active workshops, the locations of so called "democracy box/walls" in the city where they could write or submit their ideas and proposals, direct link to Consul Platform. Social networks will serve to spread awareness of the need and possibility of change in the city, as well as a sense of commitment to the city through various campaigns
- City of Niš organized the presentation of the CONSUL Platform – a tool for the development of participatory

culture among citizens, especially young population. The Consul is a comprehensive tool for citizen participation in an open, transparent and democratic society. It is used by 135 institutions in 35 countries. CONSUL allows to start all the main citizen participation processes that are used by governments worldwide. For example it has a module for citizen initiatives, where citizens can make proposals and collect supports from other citizens for voting them. It has a module of consultations, of open voting on the important issues of the institutions; another module for participatory budgeting, where citizens can decide part of the budget of the government. And other channels of participation as debates, collaborative drafting, crowd law, communities, etc. This tool can increase transparency and confidence in the democratic process and strengthen social cohesion in local communities. The purpose of this type of initiative is to enable discussions among residents and involvement in making decisions important for the all the citizens living in Niš and enable them to take an active role in public life. Such initiatives encourage interaction and help discourage segregation and cultural isolation, thus creating a more acceptable environment for social participation.

- On the same day City of Niš organized Placemaking Workshop as the initial activity of the citizens' participatory process in the preparation of the "City of Niš Development Plan 2021-2027". A placemaking defines an area within the community as a place of significance and puts a plan in place to reflect that vision. This particular workshop was organized with the aim to discuss potential solutions for development of the area along the Nišava river, more specifically, part of the river banks that are in the city center. The

representatives of the city and university, the representatives of the chamber of commerce, the students of architecture, representative NGOs and public institutions, residents, business and property owners from the area were invited to the workshop as stakeholders to discuss their needs and aspirations for that particular stretch of the city, to share their interest and influence for the project. On this occasion a placemaking planning technique was presented with the aim of activating open public areas. Participatory urban planning was discussed, as well as the economic, social and cultural impact of placemaking with the aim of creating additional value for the surrounding environment. The importance of involving residents and other users of space in the planning process, collecting ideas on the use of public areas and activating citizens and local companies in the collective development of urban projects was emphasized. After initial introduction to the placemaking process, as a practical process for transforming public spaces, the participants spent some time on site, evaluating the space, as well as its assets or challenges. Through site analysis, teamwork and the application of the presented methods, the participants devised proposals for activating and developing the area along the Nišava river.

- By closing the traffic along main city streets from 09.00 to 12.00 the traditional Car Free Day was marked. City of Niš, this year as well as the previous ones, participated in the celebration of the European Mobility Week, which is being held from September 16 to 22. The European Mobility Week is being marked under the slogan *Mobility without Pollution for All*. European Mobility Week is an annual campaign that promotes sustainable urban mobility and encourages local governments across

Europe to introduce sustainable transport measures, develop infrastructure for sustainable urban mobility and offer their citizens alternatives to car use. The theme of this year's event reflects the European Commission's ambitious goal of making Europe a carbon-neutral continent by 2050 – that is, emitting as much carbon dioxide as nature can absorb, thus eliminating one of the main factors of climate change. A healthier environment, better air quality, lower noise levels, as well as greater traffic safety are the goals of the campaign that ended today with Car Free Day. This year, due to the special situation we are in, the European Mobility Week is held in specific circumstances, without organizing mass gatherings, characteristic for this event.

2019

- Roma Policy Officer in the European Commission, Marta Garcia Fidalgo and Project Manager for Social Inclusion and Minority Rights at the EU Delegation to Serbia, Mirjana Maksimovic paid a half-day visit to Niska Banja City Municipality and the project "Establishing Housing and Financial Autonomy of Roma Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons through Cooperation on the Local Level" funded by the European Union, and implemented by the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, the Roma League and the City of Niska Banja. During her visit to Niška Banja, the Roma Policy Coordinator and Project Manager got acquainted with the project and the results achieved, but also visited three families from the readmission group. She ended her visit with a visit to

the first Roma Cultural Center in the Balkans, which opened in May this year.

- The “European Local Democracy Week” (ELDW) is a pan-European event which aims at boosting local democracy and citizen participation. It is an initiative coordinated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. Local authorities from all the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe, and their associations are invited to register and organize public events to promote and foster democratic participation at grassroots level. This year main theme of ELDW is “Local Democracy: Building Trust”. Since the right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs at local level is enshrined in the preamble of the European Charter of Local Self-Government of 1985, and detailed in its Additional Protocol of 2009, it is fundamental for an established and functioning local democracy to promote education for democratic citizenship among young people and children. Moreover, by engaging children and youth, local authorities will understand better their needs and will be able to develop more targeted responses for and with the younger generation, thus building a more inclusive democratic local The first activity organized by the City of Nis within ELDW was the presentation of the Youth Council directed towards presenting the way how young people could approach the Youth Council and get involved in resolving youth issues. The Youth Council is commissioned by the local Assembly. The purpose of the Youth Council is to support, complement and monitor activities directed at youth policy development and implementation. Youth Council is a mechanism which enables young people to take an active role in decision

making, and for networking and inter-sectoral cooperation of institutions dealing with the young people. Then City of Nis Office of the Mayor organized the visit of the members of the pupils' parliament and senior classes of the primary school Njegos to Nis City Hall. They had the opportunity to see what the Mayor did, how he made decisions and ask him questions. Youth Office of the City of Nis organized the Youth NGO Fair in order to enable them to present their activities to the young and the way of cooperating with the local authorities and attracting young people to take part in their projects. The local government is supporting the young by supporting the work of youth NGOs. Youth Office improves youth politics in the area of education, sports, free time, increasing employment, information, health, culture, gender equality, preventing crimes and violence. Some of the services which the Youth Office provides are: financing youth projects, providing career guidance, organizing internships, supporting volunteering, providing free seminars for increasing youth competences, informing the young, etc. Open data can be viewed as raw material that enables the creation of practical solutions in the public and private sectors and forms a new generation of entrepreneurs and social innovators. City of Nis Office for Local Economic Development and Projects presented the concept of Open Data, good practice examples in Serbia and worldwide, as well as examples of reuse of those sets of data in order to create an added value and better and more transparent services provided to the citizens. The general public also had the opportunity to have the insight into the open data of the City of Nis, as the result of the project "Open Data Appear on the Map" which has been realized within the national program "Open Data – Open Opportunities", implemented by the UNDP Serbia and the Office for IT and e-Government, supported by the UK Good Governance Fund and the World Bank.

- Finnish ambassador in Serbia Mr. Kimo Lahdevirta spoke about the priorities of the Finland chairing the EU Council in the second half of 2019 at the presentation held at Eu Info Corner in Nis. During the presentation of the priorities of the Finnish EU Presidency the Ambassador also emphasized the importance of enlargement of the Union as well as the unity of the entire continent. "If we want to succeed in the future, I think we must all be together, not only EU member states but all European countries," said Ambassador Lahdevirta. Finland took over the rotating six-month presidency of the EU Council from Romania on 1 July this year. Priority issues include strengthening shared values and the rule of law, competitiveness and social inclusion, taking on the role of global leader in the fight against climate change, and overall protection of citizens' security. After the presentation in the EU info corner, he officially opened the exhibition Finnish Innovative Design in the Officers' Mess Building, which was realized in cooperation with the organization Young Ambassadors from Nis.
- City of Nis marked the European Mobility Week with traditional program on main city square. This European initiative encourages cities to introduce sustainable transport measures and urges people to change traffic behavior – opting for alternative modes of transport instead of cars. European Mobility Week is a manifestation promoting alternative modes of transport in relation to motorized transport using fossil fuels. The aim of the European Mobility Week is to make efforts to reduce the use of passenger cars and to improve conditions for public transport, movement of cyclists and pedestrians through promotional events and the

implementation of at least one sustainable measure of sustainable urban mobility.

- The Delegation of the European Union to Serbia and the EU Info Corner in Nis presented the report of the European Commission on Serbia for 2019 at Nis City Hall. The basic conclusion reached by the Commission is that Serbia has progressed in the field of economics, but not enough in the area of the rule of law and media freedom. The aim of the presentation was to bring together relevant stakeholders at the local level, which implies the participation of representatives of the business community, academic community, institutions, civil society organizations from Nis and southern Serbia. The participants were able to ask questions and actively participate in the discussion on this year's European Commission Report on Serbia. The key findings of the Report were presented in Nis by the Head of the European Integration Sector in the EU Delegation to Serbia, Ms. Radica Nursdorfer. The economic aspects within the process of European integration of Serbia were the focus of the presentation. The speakers before the discussion were Ivan Pavlovic, from the City of Nis Office for Local Economic Development and Projects and Prof Boban Stojanovic, the professor at the Faculty of Economics in Nis and the President of the Nis Society of Economists.
- The European Film Festival was held at Oficirski Dom in Nis. For the eighth consecutive year the festival brings the latest European movies to the gardens, open-air cinemas, EUtek libraries and cultural centers throughout Serbia. By the end of August, traveling European Film Festival will visit nine cities with six films, followed by even more films of the best European production,

which the Serbian audience will be able to see during autumn. The European Film Festival is part of the campaign # EU4YOU, which brings citizens closer to the European Union. The festival in Nis was organized by the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia and the EU Info Network in Belgrade, Nis and Novi Sad, in cooperation with Nis Cultural Center, Media and Reform Center, French Institute in Nis with the support of the City of Nis.

- Visitors' Center at Cerjanska Cave has been officially opened. The visitors' center is 250 meters in size, the first of its kind in the Nisava District and it is intended for fans of adrenaline sports, cave explorers, visitors and tourists, and it will have a reception area with dressing room – wardrobe, cafeteria, souvenir shop and administrative center. The visitor center has been created as a joint project by Tourist Organizations of Nis, the City of Sofia and the Association "Love and Light" from Montana within the EU Interrerg IPA program of cross-border cooperation between Serbia and Bulgaria.
- The EU Info Corner Nis in partnership with the City of Nis organized the Day of European values and thus marked the Week of Europe and three years of joint work at new premises in Vozdova Street. This event open for all citizens of Nis was organized at the city center. The event is part of the EU for You Campaign. The programme prepared for the event included the performances of the orchestra Impresija, children's choir Carolija, youth dance group Boom 018, and the students of Secondary Grammar School Svetozar Markovic. Also the civil society organizations that have been actively working in the local community on promoting European values and communicating took interactive and creative approach in introducing citizens to their work. The Day of European

Values is part of the European Union Delegation Campaign in Serbia and the EU Info Network in Belgrade, Nis and Novi Sad and is being implemented under the title #EUzaTebe, with the idea to promote the results of EU development aid to Serbia in the process of European integration.

- City of Nis and EU Info Point Nis marked the Day of Europe, May 9th, by joint activity of 3 D Mapping Projection of the flags of the European Union and the Republic of Serbia on the building facade of Nis National Theatre. The facade of the theater in Nis became canvas for the symbolic conjunction of the synergy and joint efforts of the Republic of Serbia and the European Union in bringing our country closer to a community of European nations. This joint activity of the City of Nis and EU Info Point Nis was part of the **#EUzaTEBE** umbrella campaign implemented by European Delegation to Serbia and EU Info Network's (EU Info Centre in Belgrade and EU Info Points in Novi Sad and Nis), together with local partners with the aim of promoting the results of EU's development assistance to Serbia as part of the European integration process.
- Mobile teams of cities and municipalities in Serbia, including the City of Nis, which deal with Roma inclusion, were presented the keys of 30 Fiat Tipo cars as well as 30 laptops under the EU support program in order to increase their capacity and adequate functioning. The EU Support to Roma Inclusion Program – The Stabilization of Local Communities for the Inclusion of Roma from has been implemented Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities (SCTM) since 2017, financed by the EU, and the main beneficiary is the RS Ministry of

Labor, Employment, Veterans' and Social Affairs. Mobile Roma Inclusion Teams are working bodies of the city/municipality, formed to strengthen cooperation between local institutions and the Roma community. Mobile team members organize joint field visits to Roma settlements and provide joint and coordinated support and assistance to individuals and families.

- The Ambassador of Romania to Serbia Ms. Oana Kristina Popa spoke about the priorities of Romania's EU presidency at EU Info Point in Nis. Romania assumed the rotating six-month presidency of the European Union on January 1, 2019. At the presentation at the EU info corner, with the presence of a large number of representatives of local government, civil sector and institutions, the ambassador said that the connection was a common European value that needs to be continued. Romania will base its chairmanship on four basic pillars: equality for all EU citizens, a safe and secure Europe, strengthening the global influence of Europe, stimulating solidarity and promoting common values.

2018

- The year 2018 was declared European Year of Cultural Heritage and marked throughout Europe by a series of events. In its diversity and richness, cultural heritage connects us and gives us a common understanding of the places we live in and which make up a large European continent. From the ancient myth of Europe to today's home for more than 500 million people, we find this heritage in our villages and cities, castles and churches, works of art in museums, as well as in our homes, crafts and grandma's kitchens. Cultural heritage connects us, giving us a true European identity, helping us to build a better future for younger generations.

Under the slogan "Our Heritage: Where the Past Meets the Future," the EU Delegation to Serbia and the EU Info Network (EU Info Center Belgrade and the EU Info Corners in Nis and Novi Sad) organized a campaign to promote cultural heritage throughout the year. Numerous events in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Nis, Novi Pazar and other cities were organized during the campaign aimed at bringing places of importance for cultural heritage closer to the citizens, raising awareness of the common cultural heritage and strengthening the sense of belonging to the common European area.

- Among the local governments whose projects are financially supported by the EU PRO program is also the City of Nis, for which € 30,000 was approved for the development of projects for the execution of works for the multifunctional Expo Center, to be built at the location Lozni Kalem in Niška Banja. The European Support to Municipal Development Programme – EU PRO contributes to overall economic and social growth in 99 local self-governments in the regions of Sumadija and Western Serbia and Southern and Eastern Serbia. EU PRO aims to create business environment conducive to new investments and job creation, more competitive enterprises, improved work of local self-governments and enhanced social inclusion. The European Union allocated total amount of 25 million Euros for the realization of this three-year programme that started in January 2018. The Programme is implemented by the United Nation Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in partnership with the Ministry of European Integration (MEI) and other line ministries and institutions of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. EU PRO relies on the best practices and achieved results of its predecessor programmes se EU PROGRES and European PROGRES.

- The construction of the Visitor Center at Cave Cerje is nearing completion. The facility is built with funds provided from the Interreg IPA cross-border project implemented together by TON and Sofia. The total budget of the project is 587,695 Euros. 477,208 euros is a donation of the European Union, while the rest of the funds were provided by the City of Nis. The Visitor Center will have the exhibition and gallery space, the accommodation for speleological equipment, restaurant and space for rest for the visitors as well as the space for guides, security and sale of tickets, and sanitary facilities.

- The session of the Committee of Regions – Republic of Serbia Joint Consultative Committee was held in Nis with the focus on the Republic of Serbia's EU accession negotiations and the impact the negotiations had at the subnational level of government. The second part of the session was dedicated to the topic of tourism as a catalyst of a better life at the local level. The Joint Consultative Committee was formed in 2014. Its task is to establish dialogue and cooperation between regional and local governments in Serbia, on the one hand, and the EU Committee of Regions, on the other, and to prepare them for participation in the work of the Committee of Regions, upon EU accession.

- The City of Nis and the Municipality of Niska Banja were the hosts of the 5th session of the Joint Consultative Committee of the EU-Serbia Region Committee. The study tour of the project Health Paths and Meetings in Niska Banja, financed through Interreg IPA CBC Bulgaria Serbia

funds, was organized. The reconstruction of the health paths is financed by a cross-border project jointly implemented by City Municipality Niska Banja and Bulgarian municipality Zemen. The objectives of the project are increasing of the tourist attractiveness of the cross-border region of the municipalities Zemen and Niska Banja. The project aims at capitalization of the natural and historical recourses in the region and improvement of touristic products. Through investments in infrastructure the project will contribute to the creation of more attractive tourist conditions and will attract further investments. The project will also popularize the region as a tourist destination.

- With the help of the European Union, Nis City Municipality Crveni Krst reconstructed the picnic area of Vidriste in intact nature and an old Turkish house and the mask museum with a workshop for their production in the village of Kosarevo near Breznik in Bulgaria within the joint project "Tourism and Tradition – Multicolored, Fun and Attractive" which was realized as part of the cross-border cooperation funded by the European Union from IPA funds. The project is worth 600,000 euros, and both parties received half of this money to preserve tradition and promote tourism.
- Within the European Mobility Week, the City of Nis, like previous years, took an active part in an international campaign whose motto this year was "Mix and Move". European Mobility Week 2018 is focusing on 'multimodality' – the mixing of transport modes within the same journey or for different trips. Embracing the concept of multimodality means rethinking the way we move about our cities, and having the willingness to try

out new forms of mobility. From a city's perspective, it requires the political will to support alternative transport methods. On this occasion a Day without Car event was held at the main city square and along main city roads. Many athletes took part in the event as well as children of pre-school and school age. The recreational cycling ride from the main city square along the streets of the wider city center back to the main square was held. This traditional event was organized by the EU Info Corner and the City of Nis.

- The first cycle of this year's European Film Festival in Nis was held from June 20 to June 23 at Officers' Mess Building in Nis. The festival was a part of the cultural heritage promotion campaign because the European Union declared 2018 the European Year of Cultural Heritage. The motto of the campaign and festival is "Our Heritage: Where the Past Meets the Future" with the desire to encourage the discovery and research of European cultural heritage through the film. During the festival, eight films from France, Portugal, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia and Spain were presented. The European Film Festival is organized by the Nis Cultural Center, the French Institute in Nis, the Media and Reform Center Nis, and in partnership with the Delegation of the European Union, the EU Info Center and the EU Info Corner Nis, and in cooperation with the Network of Cultural Centers of the European Union (EUNIC) and the City of Nis.
- At Nis City Hall the representatives of the EU Delegation to Serbia presented the Report by the European Commission on the progress of Serbia which covers the period of the last year and a half, from

October 2016 to April 2018. Nora Hairinen, the Head of the European Union Delegation in Serbia's Political Sector on this occasion stressed that the greatest progress has been made in the field of economic development and macroeconomics, and that additional efforts had to be done in the area of rule of law, independence of the judiciary system, fight against corruption and media freedom.

- International Erasmus Games this year were held in Nis from 18 to 21 May. More than 250 foreign students from all parts of Europe met in Nis to compete in one of the biggest European sports competitions for students. The organizer of these games is student organization – Erasmus Student Network Nis. The City of Nis is the fourth city in Europe to host the International Erasmus Games after Krakow, Milan and Porto. The purpose of this event is the cultural exchange through sports competitions, as well as the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. The organization of the competition in Nis was supported by the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia and the EU Info Corner Nis.
- EU Info Corner with the support of the City of Nis marked the Day of Europe with a number of cultural activities and entertainment program. The official event started with the program for the youngest at the amphitheater on the bank of Nisava River with the performance of the children's choir Carolija, and they also enjoyed the performance of last year's winners of the competition "Serbia in the Rhythm of Europe". After the completion of the musical part of the program, the

children gathered for the celebration the countries of Europe by the members of Association "Young Creators – We grow". By letting balloons in the colors of the European Union flag fly into the sky at the amphitheatre which continued at the nearby Officers' Mess Building where an exhibition of children's works prepared at the creative workshops in the EU Info Corner on the subject of cultural heritage of Serbia and Europe was opened. The Day of Europe celebration continued with the program for somewhat older audience at the Nis Cultural Center where the Slovak film "Fer-Play" was screened. During the celebration of Europe Day in Nis, the National Theater building in this city was illuminated during the night in the colors of the European Union flag.

- During his first official visit to Nis, Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia Sem Fabrizi was acquainted with projects implemented successfully by the EU in Nis. Among the topics of the visit was the European Year of Cultural Heritage and cultural and historic importance of the city. The representatives of the Nis City Local Economic Development and Project Office made a presentation of successful projects. Following the meeting at the Mayor's Office Ambassador Fabrizi and his hosts took a tour through downtown Nis and learned more about the rich history of that city. He also paid a visit to the archaeological exhibition of the National Museum in Nis, followed by a visit to the EU Info Point and Aleksandar Markovic's exhibition *Dehumanization* dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust. Together with city officials and the Dean of the Faculty of Electronic Engineering Dragan Jankovic, Fabrizi toured the Start Up Centre of the Faculty – the first segment of the science and technological park for which the European Investment Bank has allocated EUR15,2 million. Students brought

Ambassador closer to technological innovation they had come up with, such as the smart phone mobile app "52 weekends in Serbia". Head of the EU Delegation also had a chance to pay a virtual visit to several monasteries in the vicinity of Nis thanks to a 3D presentation. Ambassador ended his visit by taking part in a debate titled "*Ask me anything about the EU,*" organized by the European Movement in Serbia within the project *Europe for Me*. Ambassador Fabrizi talked to the citizens for more than an hour, answering their questions concerning decentralization, human rights, opportunities for farmers, the negotiating process, and bringing them closer to the Western Balkans Enlargement Strategy.

2017

- The City of Nis was awarded the certificate for successful adoption of the Support Package to improve the human resources management in the local self-government. This project, implemented with the financial support of the Council of Europe and the European Union, was implemented by the Council of Europe Office in Serbia in cooperation with the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities. The overall objective of the project is to improve the efficiency and administrative capacities of local self-government units through the establishment of a professional training system and the improvement of the human resources management function for a greater degree of efficiency and satisfaction with the work of local self-governments. Bearing in mind that public administration reform is aimed at increasing the efficiency of public administration and the satisfaction of the citizens with the work of local self-governments, this project has established a framework for systematized and efficient human resources management in

the local administration. Within the project, trainings and e-training in the field of professional development and human resources management were held, more than 30 models of acts were developed for more efficient and better quality implementation in practice, and consultant support was provided in establishing human resource management functions in local self-governments. The motive of the City of Nis for participation in this project is the tendency to become a good administration tailored according to the needs of the citizens, which is oriented towards providing fast and efficient services. Also, changes in regulations require improvement of work of local self-governments in the field of human resources management. The City of Nis is one of the 20 pilot units of local self-governments that took part in this project.

- Within the European Mobility Week, the EU Info Corner Nis, the City of Nis and the City Administration for Public Utilities, Energy and Transport marked the day without cars, September 22. The canvas with the message "Drive Less, Walk More! Take Care of the Environment!" showing green tree created within the action green pedestrian crossing, held in Nis on the first day of the European Mobility Week, was put up at the shopping center Kalca in Niš.
- The main EU programme for culture was presented at EU Info Corner Nis within the KreNi conference the first and most influential creativity festival in southeastern Serbia gathering innovative creative professionals and experts from all over the world. The idea of the European Commission was to modernize the system of culture through Creative Europe Programme and strengthen

competitiveness and innovation in this area. The examples of good practice and planned public calls for cultural and creative spaces and cities, as well as projects for European cooperation were also presented. The KreNi Conference of creative Industries, held for the third time in Nis, is organized by the Association of Citizens Young Ambassadors with the support of the Delegation of Europe Union in the Republic of Serbia and the City of Nis.

- EU Library Corner, specially equipped part of the library for informing citizens about the European Union, was opened at the National Library Stevan Sremac in Nis. Eu Library Corner in Nis is one of 45 corners formed in libraries in 45 municipalities in Serbia, which are part of the EU Corner network of libraries which has been financed by the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia. "EUTEKA – EU in your library" is a project aimed at providing concrete support to libraries throughout Serbia so that they can become places for informing citizens about EU related topics in their communities. More information on the project can be found at: euinfo.rs/euteka.
- Young musicians from all over Serbia, sixteen soloists and bands presented their talents at Youth Stage within the renowned Misville Jazz Festival in Nis Fortress. Youth Stage was established four years ago with the support of the European Union, and since then several thousand young musicians have been given the opportunity to promote their creativity. This support continues every year.

- In order to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Rome Treaties establishing the European Economic Community, the current European Union, the exhibition "All Unions of the EU – the Legacy of the Treaty of Rome for Today's Europe" was opened at the Officers' Mess Building in Nis. The exhibition was organized by the EU Info Corner Nis in cooperation with the Delegation of the European Union in Serbia, the Embassy of Italy in Belgrade and the City of Nis. The exhibition was opened by Mr. Richard Masha from the EU Delegation and the Deputy Mayor of Nis, Prof. Dr. Milos Bandjur.
- Day of Europe was ceremoniously marked at the EU Info Corner in Nis. With the presence of numerous associates, partners, representatives of local self-government, media and fellow citizens, yellow and blue balloons in the colors of the European Union were symbolically released.

2016

- The European Delegation in Serbia presented a valuable gift to the University Library "Nikola Tesla" of 50 books of professional literature dealing with legal and scientific developments related to the functioning of the European Union. The donation was handed over to the Director of the Library, Zoran Zivkovic, by Michael Devenport, the Head of the European delegation in Serbia. This library, based on its literary and scientific material, is an important place for science and education in Nis and throughout southeastern Serbia. Nis City Deputy Mayor Prof. Dr. Milos Bandjur, also attended the ceremony, and on this occasion he emphasized the importance of this kind of literature,

which would easily find its way to professors and students interested in studying the policy of the European Union, but also to all those of our fellow citizens who wanted to be informed about the European Union. It is very important that the academic community in Nis continues to cooperate with the Delegation of the European Union in Serbia in order to realize the foreign policy priority of our country, which implies future membership in the European Union.

- The meeting of Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic with the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia Majkl Devenport and the ambassadors of the countries of the Union was held at Officers' Mess Building in Nis. The meeting was attended by Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic.

- The Project of the Wastewater Collection and Treatment Plant in Nis was presented at the Eu Info Corner in Niš in the presence of the Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia Michael Davenport, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic, RS Minister for European Integrations Jadranka Joksimovic and RS Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic as well as 22 ambassadors and diplomatic representatives of the embassies of the Member States of the European Union. Through the program for EU pre-accession development assistance, IPA 2017, the grants will be provided for the construction of a wastewater treatment plant and the construction of a sewerage network in Nis.

- Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic and the Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia Michael Devenport, together with ambassadors and diplomatic representatives of 22

member states of the Union and Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic visited the Nis fortress on the occasion of visit of Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic and the Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia Michael Devenport together with the ambassadors and the representative of 22 EU countries.

- The City of Nis was visited by the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, Mrs. Stana Bozovic, the European Union Delegation in Serbia, Richard Masha, as well as representatives of the Office for European Integration of the Republic of Serbia. The occasion for the visit to the city of Nis was the presentation of a feasibility study for the project of waste collection and treatment of waste water in this city. The study should make it possible for Nis to enter the program of development assistance to pre-accession funds of the EU, IPA 2017, and obtain grant for the construction of waste water treatment and sewerage network. This project would represent the largest infrastructure project in the field of environmental protection, which would be financed from the EU pre-accession funds. The project of collection and treatment of wastewater for the City of Nis includes construction of a new collector, restoration of existing, afterwards, the city plant for waste water treatment, as well as additional treatment of sludge. Complete project and technical documentation for the plant and sewage will be funded from the new support programs of the Swedish International Development Agency to the environmental sector in Serbia, PEID, Preparation and Development of Investments in Environment.

- The 7th International Music Festival Constantinus in Nis was opened with the performance of the Norwegian choir Con Vocale. On this occasion, the choir performed for the first time in Serbia "Requiem" of the famous contemporary British composer John Ruther. This year International Music Festival Constantinus was financially helped the EU Delegation to Serbia and the EU Info Corner Nis. The cooperation will continue in autumn, as concerts will be organized in primary schools in order to popularize quality music among the youngest, in which Constantinus Lauret will perform.

- The Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia Ambassador Michael Davenport and Nis City Mayor Zoran Perisic officially opened the EU Info Point in the center of Nis (5, Vozda Karadjordja). Then EU Ambassador Davenport opened another significant event in Nis – an exhibition of photographs "EU and Serbia: 15 Years of Partnership" in Officers' Mess Building in Nis. The exhibition consists of 20 illustrative photographs and it is part of marking a significant jubilee – a decade of the support of the European Union to our country. Since 2001, the EU and Serbia have jointly implemented successful projects across the country that have boosted development and have brought benefits to citizens in many areas – infrastructure, education, health, environmental protection and many other sectors.

- As part of the celebration of the Month of Europe in Nis, organized by the Delegation of the European Union in Serbia and the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia, and in cooperation with the EU Info Corner Nis Slovenian

theatre performed at Nis National Theatre on the occasion of marking the Europe Day.

- Last year, the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia assisted financially the Nisville International Jazz Festival. Ambassador Davenport, in the name of good cooperation with the renowned festival, walked along Nis Fortress where this festival is traditionally organized in mid-August, accompanied by the representatives of the City of Nis Youth Office and young Nisville volunteers. The Youth Stage was formed last year with the financial support of the EU Delegation through the project of Nisville Foundation "Jazz – A Multicultural Expression". The idea of the project is to educate, merge and organize concerts for 60 young musicians of different nationalities (Serbian, Roma, Albanian and Bulgarian) from six cities: Bujanovac, Leskovac, Nis, Vranje, Vladicin Han and Bosilegrad.

2015

- The presentation of the latest report of the European Commission and its economic aspects was held at Nis City Hall. Serbia is praised for progress in economic reforms, with the conclusion that the Serbian economy is recovering from the recession, and that, thanks to significant consolidation measures and better tax collection, the budget deficit has been significantly reduced. What is also reported in the report is that it is necessary to ensure full respect for the freedom of the media and freedom of expression, especially with

regard to the transparency of ownership and media financing. It is a general impression that the Commission considers that Serbia has made enough progress to open the first negotiation chapters and this is certainly good news for all citizens. All interested in the City Hall had the opportunity to get acquainted with the economic elements of this report in more detail, followed by a discussion with the participation of business community representatives, the academic community and the media.

- The Interreg IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Program of Serbia and Bulgaria for the period until 2020 was presented at Nis City Hall. The total amount allocated for the first call for proposals is just over € 12.5 million. This call gives the opportunity to potential candidates from Bulgaria and Serbia to apply joint projects in the territory of the cross-border region: for Bulgaria, these are Vidin, Montana, Vraca, Sofia, Pernik, Custendil, and the following districts in Serbia – Borski, Zajecarski, Nisavski, Toplicki, Pirotski, Jablanicki and Pcinjski. The border region of Bulgaria-Serbia cross-border cooperation program covers the territory of almost 40,000 km² with 12 administrative units: 6 regions in Bulgaria, and 6 districts in Serbia, representing equivalent statistical territorial administrative units. The objective of this program is to strengthen the territorial unity of the border region of Bulgaria and Serbia, the competitiveness of the territory as well as the sustainability of development through economic and social cooperation and environmental cooperation along the administrative boundary. This project also provides support to the development of infrastructure that enables social and economic progress and improvement of the environment on

both sides of the border as well as strengthening economic synergy in the region and capacity building through the use of common regional potential. Finally, one of the important goals is to promote the principles of sustainable development within the framework of cross-border cooperation programs in areas of importance for improving mutual understanding and respect, through the development of a model of successful cooperation in the business sector, at the level of local stakeholder representatives as well as at the political level in areas of key priorities.

- Nis City Deputy Mayor Ljubivoje Slavkovic met with the Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia Michael Devenport during his visit to Nis. The two officials discussed the cooperation so far with the EU Delegation in Serbia, but also about the possibilities for the City of Nis to become involved in new EU funded projects. As part of the visit of the Ambassador Devenport to our city, the Fair dedicated to EU-funded projects entitled "European Union and Serbia at Work" was opened organized by the Delegation of the European Union in Serbia.
- A series of events organized by the EU Info corner and the City of Nis marked the European Mobility Week. The traffic was stopped and the very city center was turned into a pedestrian zone where hundred young people from dozens of Nis sports clubs showed their skills. The EU info corner organized an exhibition on the main city square of the best works at art competition of elementary school pupils from southeastern Serbia on the topic of Choose – Change – Combine in Transport. This

year, the cycling tour has gathered over 200 cyclists who rode the streets of the city in an organized column. Nis City Mayor Zoran Perisic took active participation in cycling along the city streets.

2014

- The presentation of the European Commission's Report on the progress of our country on the road to the European Union was held at Nis City Hall. The progress report was presented by the Deputy Head of the EU Mission to Serbia Mr. Oscar Benedict. In the second part of the conference, the EU Enlargement Strategy was presented, and all interested had the opportunity to participate in an open debate on all issues related to the EU enlargement.
- The European Union Delegation to Serbia traditionally organizes a cartoonist contest titled "Myths and Prejudices, How Serbia Sees the EU and How the EU Sees Serbia". The exhibition of caricatures in Salon 77 in the Nis Fortress, organized by the EU Info Corner Nis in cooperation with the City of Nis, was officially opened by Oscar Benedict, the Deputy Head of Mission of the European Union in Serbia, and Nis City Mayor Zoran Perisic.
- Within the European Mobility Week, in which Nis is participating for the 13th time, EU Info Corner Nis organized the first Nis cycling city tour, with over 400 citizens taking part. Nis City Mayor Zoran Perisic also took part in cycling tour. After driving down the city streets, the tour ended at the famous Nis tourist resort

near the river Nisava, near the settlement of Brzi Brod, where a picnic and an appropriate sports and music program was organized. The first city cycling tour was organized by EU Delegation in Serbia and the City of Nis. This year the city of Nis took an active part in the campaign without cars. The motto of this year's campaign is: "Our streets – Our Choice", which was realized with the active participation of the Sports Association of the City of Nis and the EU Info Corner.

- EU Info Corner Nis, with the support of the City of Nis, organized the event Nis Collage of European Languages on the occasion of the European Day of Languages, on September 26th. Participants in program were schools, institutions and organizations from Nis.

- Europe Day was also marked in Nis in the "Balkanska Street of European Values", where solidarity among young people above all was promoted. Balkanska Street in Nis has become a part of the European Union for one day. Numerous stands of civil society organizations from Nis were there to inform the citizens about the union itself and European integration. In addition to the City of Nis, the organizers of this interesting way of marking Europe Day were the EU Info Corner, the Youth Initiative of Nis, Media and Reform Center, Young Ambassadors and other non-governmental organizations.

- The closing conference of the EU Progress Program was held in Nis, and besides the Head of the EU Delegation, the Minister without Portfolio in charge of European Integration Branko Ruzic and Nis City Mayor Zoran Perisic attended the conference. So far, with the help

of the EU, and the Government of Switzerland, 25 undeveloped municipalities from the south of Serbia have been financed. The financed projects have contributed to attracting investments and opening 300 new jobs, increasing the competitiveness of local self-governments, improving conditions for education and health care and improving public utilities.

- The Memorandum of Understanding was signed which would initiate the implementation of the project of establishing the Info Info Corner in Nis. Info corner of the European Union will be part of the EU communication activities of the Delegation in Serbia, with the aim of improving the knowledge about the European Union in direct contact with residents and visitors, with the active support of the city authorities. EU Info Corner will be tasked with providing information directly to residents and visitors in Nis on all issues related to the functioning of the European Union and cooperation between Serbia and EU Member States. Through the work of the Info Corner the citizens will have an insight into complete and reliable information, including answers about all the opportunities and benefits of membership, especially in the fields of economics, regional development, agriculture, science and education.