

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR SERBIA FOR 2019 PRESENTED IN NIS

July 3

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. "There are many areas that have been assessed as positive, but there are also areas that can be further advanced", said Radica Nursdorfer. "The economic assessment is positive and the figures show that Serbia has made significant progress in the field of economy. The areas where most work needs to be done is the rule of law and freedom of the media, as the smallest progress has been made here. Poor progress in the field of the rule of law in many ways slows the speed of accession. If we want to talk about statistics, there are more chapters in which Serbia has progressed this year compared to last year, and fewer chapters

where it stagnated”, said Ms. Nursdorfer. The speakers before the discussion were Ivan Pavlovic, from the City of Nis Office for Local Economic Development and Projects and Prof.dr Boban Stojanovic, the professor at the Faculty of Economics in Nis and the President of the Nis Society of Economists. “The report is mostly moderately critically oriented, but it is important for us that there is not a constant regression on this path to the European Union,” said Professor Stojanovic. “In the economy, it is essential that there is fiscal stability, solid maintenance of external debt, a surplus in the budget, and all other preconditions for Serbia’s stability and progress. However, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises could be faster and the stagnation of domestic investments has been noted. ” “The local level is very important for economic development, and City of Nis has the highest results regarding the raising capacity of local self-government units in the process of European integration, and thus adequately responding to the needs of the economy, and on the other hand there are investors who are looking for competitive local self-government like Nis. The number of open companies in the city has increased, the unemployment is reduced, and the economic growth rate has increased, “Pavlovic said. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions and actively participate in the discussion on this year’s European Commission Report on Serbia. The most important conclusions of the report can be found on the website of the EU Delegation to Serbia.

DAY OF EUROPEAN VALUES

May 11th

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.

AMBASSADOR OF BELGIUM IN NIS

March 26th

Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic met with the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Kun Adam and talked about the possibilities for improving cooperation in areas of culture, language, education and economy. "We have almost the same opinion on all these topics, which is that the

potentials for progress that are there should be used,” Mayor Bulatovic said after the meeting. Ambassador Kun Adam said that he was in Nis for the first time and that this city was very interesting for potential Belgium investors. He said that efforts should be made in this direction, to bring more Belgium investors to the region of Nis. First steps were done at the presentation of the support programs and subsidies provided to Belgian companies operating in our country organized by the Development Agency of Serbia, the Office for Economics and Trade of the Embassy of Belgium in Serbia and the Belgian-Serbian Business Association when the Office for Local Economic Development and Projects of the City of Nis, as an example of good practice in attracting foreign direct investments, presented its work and showed why Nis was declared the champion of local economic development and the winner of the prestigious Financial Times award.

NIS AND CUPRIJA – PARTNERS IN THE PROJECT

March 15th

Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic and the Mayor of Cuprija Mr. Ninoslav Eric signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on the project “Effective and Effective Property Management in Nis and Cuprija through the Introduction of the Geographic Information System”. The goal of the project is to create conditions for improving the management of property through the inventory and legalization of public property in Nis and Cuprija and increase the transparency of the work of the public administration by the introduction and development of the Geographic Information System (GIS) and the creation of an

application for GIS. In this way public administration will be closer to the citizens and the business community. "Implementation of the project in Nis and Cuprija will create unique database of integrated records for all property, together with applications for all aspects and processes of asset management. In practice, this means that, by realizing this project, we will have systematized complete data on the property of the City of Nis, both land and other immovable property, so that citizens, potential investors and all interested parties will have access to these data without waiting in line " as it was said by Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic after the signing of the MoU. He emphasized that the use of this property management model owned by Nis and Cuprija meant strengthening administrative capacities and more efficient asset management, increasing revenues, better control of costs, better risk management and adequate asset maintenance. The president of the Municipality of Cuprija Ninoslav Eric pointed out that this was very important project and that he was looking forward to implementing it with the City of Nis. "The experience Nis has in the property inventory is very important for us, since we are at the beginning. I expect that, after realization of the planned project activities, there will be a reduction in costs and an increase in revenues from property owned by our local self-government," said Eric. "Nis and Cuprija have a large number of different real estate but without precise and legally relevant data. Bearing in mind that effective public asset management imposes itself as the priority requirement in the process of development and modernization, the Office for Local Economic Development Projects, together with its partner, jointly developed a project proposal to solve identical problems", said Project Manager Ana Radovanovic from the Office for Local Economic Development and Projects. She added that Nis and Cuprija intend to provide rational use and management of property in accordance with the Law on Public Property and the Law on Planning and Construction and put the property in the function of investing and increasing the revenues of local

self-government. The project is also of multiple importances both for potential investors who will be able to obtain easier and faster information on targeted locations, as well as for citizens who, as end-users, need a reliable, responsible and open administration. Improving the management of public assets and finances creates the possibility for savings in the budget as well as conditions for sustainable local economic development. The project is financed by EU (IPA 2014) through the Exchange5 Program – EU support to local governments in the field of asset management. The program is implemented by the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government in cooperation with the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) as the implementing partner of the program and the Ministry of Finance (the Sector for Contracting and Financing Programs from EU funds) as the Contracting Authority in the program.

DONATION FROM USA FOR MARA INSTITUTION

February 25th

The day care center for children, youth and adults with disabilities in the development Mara received the donation – computer equipment from representatives of the Serbian – American Friendship Club, Spirit from America Organization and representatives of the US Military Department at US Embassy. As it has been announced, Institution Mara could soon expect another great donation from the American people intended for expansion of the capacities of the institution. On the press conference held on this occasion at Mara Institution the country manager of the Spirit of America Organization for

Serbia Mr. John Capello said that they would try to help the citizens of Nis and thus improve the relations between two nations. "I think that Mara is doing incredible job. I am here for the first time and I hope that we will cooperate for a long time. This is a small donation. We expect long-term cooperation. Thank you for your warm welcome, thank you for everything that people who work here do for the beneficiaries

and I look forward to every new visit," said John Capello from the Spirit of America. Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic thanked the guest from US for providing all the donations and not only to Mara Institution but other health care institutions. He added that the City of Nis provided additional funds for the salaries of the newly employed, and that the project and the program "a break from parenting would be able to start soon" said Bulatovic.

RESPECTS PAID TO THE LIBERATORS OF NIS FROM TURKISH RULE

January 11th

By laying flower wreaths at the Monument to Liberators in the center of Nis, the Day of the liberation of Nis from the Turks, January 11th, was marked. On this day when Nis, after almost five centuries of Turkish rule, was liberated 181 years ago from Ottoman slavery, Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic, the President of the City of Nis Assembly Rade Rajkovic, as well

as the representatives of the army, the police, the Nisava Administrative District, the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Center, the representatives of associations that nurture the traditions of the liberation wars, paid their respect to Nis liberators. On January 11, 1878, Nis was freed from the Turks and after nearly five centuries of slavery, merged with Serbia. The fighting for the liberation of Nis began in mid-December 1877, when the Ibar, Morava and Danube divisions crossed the Serbian-Turkish border and took positions northwest of the city, approaching five to eight kilometers. The Ibar division penetrated the south and cut the connection between Niš and Leskovac. Then the Serbian army won Pirot and Bela Palanka, disabling the connection of the Turkish garrison in Nis with troops in Sofia and conquered Selicevica mountain, closing the ring around Nis and on the south side.

RECEPTION FOR TRAG ETHNO ENSEMBLE

Nis City Deputy Mayor prof. Dr. Milos Bandjur met today with the Mr. Borislav Maksimović, a Representative for Culture at the Republic of Srpska Representative Office in Serbia and with members of the ethnic group Trag from the Republic of Srpska who were staying in Nis during the celebration of the Republic of Srpska Days from September 3 – 8. The ethno group Trag is a vocal-instrumental ensemble that fosters the traditional music of the Balkans. It has been performing since 2003. The group consists of ten members: four female vocalists and six instrumentalists. The accent is on traditional instruments. The repertoire of the group includes songs from Republika Srpska, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Bulgaria. Due to the fact that Trag often performs in Russia, Russian

songs have been included in the repertoire. In a cordial conversation the Deputy Mayor welcomed the members of this group and pointed out the inseparable ties between Serbia and Serbs living west of the Drina. These manifestations are one way of cultivating the folk traditions and cultural and historical heritage of the Serbian people.

CITY FESTIVITIES CELEBRATION BEGAN

The vigil at the Church of Holy Emperor Constantine and Empress Helen and the handing over of the Labarum marked the beginning of the celebration in the honor of the city patrons Holy Emperor Constantine and Empress Helen. The Bishop of Nis Aresenije delivered the service on this occasion which was attended by city officials, church officials, the foreign delegation representatives, as well as large number of Nis citizens.

NEW HEAD OF EU DELEGATION TO SERBIA SEM FABRIZI VISITED NIS

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.

Representatives of the local Development and Project Office made a presentation of successful projects. "Thanks to EU grants, we have constructed a modern clinical centre and will reconstruct the Nis-Dimitrovgrad railway line. Another project worth mentioning is the construction of wastewater treatment facility as well as the EUR1.237,000-worth of grants invested in building apartments for the most vulnerable members of the Roma community," said Darko Bulatovic the Mayor of Nis. "Knowing that towns and municipalities will be responsible for drafting as many as 75 per cent of legislation, we assign a major role to local self-governments on our journey toward the great goal of EU membership," Ambassador Fabrizi said.

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. "Today, at this Faculty, I did not see the future, I saw the present – numerous young researchers developing their ideas. At our disposal we have many instruments to support science and innovation, such as Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020," Fabrizi said. The Dean of the

Faculty said that “by investing in the science and technological park, youths in Nis and the region will reach the level of their counterparts in universities in the EU, and even exceed them.”

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.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

January 6th

Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic extended his greetings on the occasion of Christmas to all who celebrate this great Christian holiday according to the Julian calendar. “Peace of God, Christ is born! Happy Christmas to all believers who celebrate this most joyous Christian holiday according to the Julian calendar. Let Christmas, a symbol of new life and salvation, but also love and family, be a guide to all of us in the way of mutual respect, tolerance and understanding, no matter which religion or nation we belong to. I wish to all of you to spend the holiday surrounded by your loved ones and I hope Christmas will bring joy, happiness and prosperity to your homes With the sincere wishes that in the period after Christmas we will be better toward each other, and honest and

real to ourselves, once again I salute you with the most joyful greeting – Peace of God, Christ is born”.