

# **DRAGANA SOTIROVSKI – NEW MAYOR**

August 21, 2020

The members of the City of Nis Assembly elected Mrs. Dragana Sotirovski from Serbian Progressive Party as the new Mayor of the City of Nis. Dušica Davidović, from Serbian Progressive Party, was elected Deputy Mayor. Niš City Assembly also elected 9 members of the Niš City Council Board. The future councilors of Niš City Council Board are: Slobodan Randjelović, Sonja Milojković, Adriana Anastasov, Nenad Stanković, Marija Randjelović, Predrag Stojanović, Vladislav Marijanović, Miroslav Djokić and Branislav Kačar. The members of the city parliament also adopted the proposal to elect Igor Novaković as the Deputy Speaker of the City Assembly.

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## **European Commission Roma Policy Coordinator Marta Garcia Fidalgo Visits Roma Settlements in Nis**

October 25

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. “There is a lot of work being done to integrate Roma through the documents, but it is very important to know the situation in the field. My general impression after today is that there are many more problems and needs, but I will leave with the impression that there are people here in the political sphere and in the donor community who are willing to help and that there is real potential in the Roma community, ”said European Commission Roma Policy Coordinator Marta Garcia Fidalgo. European Commission Roma Policy Coordinator Marta Garcia Fidalgo added that they have been working a lot on the situation of minorities, and especially with regard to the Roma minority. They want Roma integration to become an important part of the political agenda. “In the political sphere, we can make a connection between Roma integration and EU accession because we want those politicians who are not very interested in the Roma issue but are in favor of EU accession to understand that Roma integration is one of the conditions for this”, said Fidalgo.

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**NIS EMPLOYMENT ACTION FOR**

# ROMA

October 23

The City of Niš, within the framework of the Program “Support to EU Roma Inclusion – Empowering Local Communities for Roma Inclusion”, implements the project “Nis Employment Action for Roma – NEAR”. Multiple forms of social exclusion of Roma are one of the most important issues for the Republic of Serbia on its path to the EU and sustainable economic development. Roma, women and men, experience severe poverty and social exclusion. Low levels of education and skills, accompanied by discrimination, have led to long-term unemployment for Roma. A direct obstacle to Roma inclusion in the formal labor market is related to their emancipation in the fields of education, housing and participation in public affairs. In Nis, the Roma unemployment rate is four times higher than the general population average, only 9% of Roma in Nis have a steady income from work, and only 2.5% of Roma women are full-time employed. The greatest responsibility for implementing individual measures within the most relevant strategic framework rests with public authorities at the national level – according to the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2016-2025 and at the local level – Local Action Plan for Improving the Position of Roma in Niš 2017-2019 which foresees employment and self-employment of Roma on the basis of training and retraining for new jobs, gaining additional qualifications and incentives for entrepreneurship, setting up social cooperatives and social enterprises. This approach is based on the Nis City Development Strategy and is supported by the findings of the Roma survey, which there are officially 6,996 according to 2011 census, but this number is estimated to be at least three times higher. The main activities of the project are: providing tailored active employment measures; establishing public/private/civil partnerships and market links; events

called “Accelerate Social Inclusion”. The expected results of the project are organized two-month business training and mentoring for 40 selected Roma beneficiaries, as well as employment of 20 Roma among unemployed or entrepreneurs with six months paid internships in local SMEs or with grants to assist in employment, active work on public/private/civil partnership to create more jobs, as well as organizing at least three local social events organized for the Roma population/NGOs and local institutions.

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## **Citizens’ Satisfaction with Local Self-Governments Increased**

October 22

The satisfaction with local self-government authorities, administrative services and civil servants has been increasing continuously, and now almost one in two citizens in Central Serbia feels that local self-governments are taking care of their citizens and providing them with services adequate to their needs. This is demonstrated by the results of the public opinion poll implemented within the Swiss PRO programme, supported by the Swiss Government. The survey was implemented by CeSID, on a representative sample of 11,387 adult citizens in 50 towns and municipalities in the Region of Šumadija and West Serbia and the Region of South and East Serbia. After the 2010 results with only 22 percent of respondents feeling that local authorities were taking care of their citizens, a rising trend has been recorded, with 26 percent in 2013, 37 percent

in 2017 and the last survey results show that 45 percent of respondents feel positively about the treatment of citizens by the local self-government. Even though the perception that local self-governments are trying to meet their citizens' needs is enhancing, still one-third of respondents feel that local authorities mostly do not respond to their citizens' needs, and 12 percent feel that they do not respond to them at all. The Presentation of citizens' views was held in Nis at Nis City Hall. A detailed analysis of the results is available on the Swiss PRO website (<https://www.swisspro.org.rs/uploads/files/166-666-citizen-satisfaction-survey.pdf>). On the behalf of the City of Nis, the attendees were greeted by the Assistant Mayor Marina Kostic. The City of Nis has been doing a great deal in the last few years to improve the quality of life in the local community, especially in terms of increasing the level of services provided by local self-government.

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## **DANCE CARAVAN IN NIS**

October 22

The National Art Dance Foundation and Belgrade Dance Festival, with the support of the Art Mentor Foundation of Lucerne and the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government of the Republic of Serbia, continued this year's Dance Caravan project. This time, the program covered 10 cities in Serbia and Nis was one of them. On the big stage of the Army House, ballet worshippers could enjoy a ballet gala concert with popular variations of the classical repertoire performed by young dancers, students of Serbian and Italian ballet schools

and champions of the Belgrade National Theater Ballet, Ana Pavlovic and Jovan Veselinovic. The Deputy Mayor of Niš Milos Bandur, as well as a large number of art lovers and the students of Nis schools attended the gala concert.

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## **RECEPTION FOR PARTICIPANTS OF SIMTERM CONFERENCE**

October 22

The reception was organized at the City Hall as an introduction to the SIMTERM 2019 – the International Conference on Thermal Science and Engineering of Serbia under the patronage of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia organized by Department of Thermal Engineering of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Niš and the Society of Thermal Engineers of Serbia with the support of the City of Nis and City Municipality Crveni Krst. The experts from this field participating in the conference were received by Mayor Darko Bulatovic. They discussed energy, sustainable development and the measures that the City of Nis was implementing to make Nis an eco-friendly city. SIMTERM 2019 gathered researchers, engineers, experts, representatives of local and central government and companies from Serbia and abroad, interested in the exchange of scientific and practical information and experience from the thematic fields of Energy – Efficiency – Ecology – Economy. The delegation was led by Prof. Dr. Mirjana Lakovic Paunovic, President of the Organizing Committee of this Scientific Conference.

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# **CITY OF KECSKEMET DELEGATION VISITED NIS**

October 21

Nis City Mayor Darko Bulatovic received the delegation from the City of Kecskemét from Hungary. The Hungarian delegation is led by Deputy Mayor Jozsef Gaal who is also the president of Bacs –Kiskun Chamber of Commerce and Industry. “In addition to all the joint activities I would like to draw your attention to Nis Spa, from the point of view of possible cooperation, because Hungary is a country of developed spa tourism, and we can offer a lot to potential investors,” said Mayor Bulatovic. Jozsef Gaal said that there were interested Hungarian investors, ready to invest in spa tourism in Serbia and that they would be provided with the necessary documentation, and then concrete meetings were to follow. There is also a possibility of faculty-level cooperation in scientific fields, since the member of the Kecskemét delegation was Jozsef Karpati, the Head of the Cabinet of the Dean of John Neumann University in Kecskemét.

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## **OPEN DATA FOR INNOVATION IN**

# THE CITY OF NIS

October 21

The workshop on open data and innovation was held at the Center for Innovative Entrepreneurship of Youth. Assistant Mayor Goran Milosavljevic spoke about the importance of open data in the context of the activities with which the City of Nis this year marked European Week of Local Democracy, with the desire to build standards in establishing, functioning, assessing and protecting the level of government closest to citizens and thus ensuring effective participation of the members of the local communities in deciding about things that are of concern for their everyday life. 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", was highlighted. Now, this data is 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. The workshop discussed the concept of open data as well as examples of their use and good practice in Serbia and worldwide. The participants were also presented the results of the project that was implemented by the City of Nis Office for Local Economic Development and Projects in cooperation with the organization Palgo Smart within the framework of the national project Open Data – Open Opportunities. The City of Nis published a large number of data sets on the national open data portal. In the practical part of the workshop, through teamwork, new solutions to specific problems and challenges were devised based on the use of open data. The data opening

in the City of Nis is supported by y the United Nations Development Program and the RS Office of Information Technology and Electronic Administration, with financial support of by the United Kingdom Good Governance Fund (GGF) and the World Bank.

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# **THE CONCERT BY SVERDLOVSK STATE CHILDRENS' PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA IN NIS**

October 21

Russian choir Chapel of Boys and Young Men of the Sverdlovsk State Children's Philharmonic Orchestra from Yekaterinburg, led by artistic director, Friedrich Weisheim, held a festive concert in front of a packed hall of the National Theater in Niš. The performance of one of the most famous choirs of this type in the world was made possible by the Company NIS. Music lovers and connoisseurs, academics, students, high school and elementary students, as well as many other interested citizens, welcomed the choir with applause and enjoyed the performance of the choir who, by their performance, won the sympathies of the whole world. The concert was attended by Nis City Deputy Mayor Milos Bandjur and the representatives of NIS Company. "We are very grateful for the love Serbia has for Russia, our people, music and song. Thanks to NIS Company we came to Serbia for the first time in 2016, and now we are here again and we are very happy that our choir started its second visit to Serbia in Nis, because this city has a special soul. We would like to thank everyone who came to support us and to share our energy and emotions with us," said Natalia

Podkoritova, Deputy Director of the Sverdlovsk Children's Philharmonic. Alexei Chernikov addressed the audience on the behalf of the NIS Company. "It is a great honor and pleasure to welcome you on behalf of NIS Company, which made this concert possible. Tonight's concert is our gift to you all. We are glad that you can attend something that none of us have the opportunity to hear every day," Chernikov said.

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## **FAIR OF THE YOUTH ASSOCIATIONS HELD**

October 21

A fair of NGOs dealing with youth policy and presentation of youth projects was held in the courtyard of the Officers' Mess Building in Nis. This event was a good opportunity for youth organizations to present their activities to young people and to attract them to participate in current projects. Local self-government supports young people by supporting the work of youth associations, which is why such fairs are organized in order to achieve the highest possible level of connection between youth and associations and thus young people with local self-government. All youth associations, which received funds for the implementation of projects from the City of Niš by the Public Competition for the Financing and Co-financing of Youth Projects in 2019, announced their project activities and informed all visitors about their contents. The fair was opened by the member of Nis City Council for youth and sports, Branislav Kacar, and Assistant Mayor of the City of Nis, Marina Kostic. Visitors of the fair, as well as the representatives of fifteen associations, had the opportunity to discuss with the councilor in charge all problems with

which they are faces in practice and to offer their suggestions for some new solutions and directions in which the youth sector in the City should develop in the future. The Youth Associations Fair is the final event in celebration of the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) organized by the City of Nis Mayor's Office and the Youth Office of the Secretariat for Youth and Sport. 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 community.