

**REGIONAL HERALD FOR PROMOTION OF CULTURE OF
MINORITY RIGHTS AND INTERETHNIC TOLERANCE**

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Top story in this issue:

INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS AND MINORITIES IN NORMALIZATION PROCESS

Although many say war and ethnic conflicts which marked past decade in former Yugoslav countries are a past not to be repeated again, the process of facing that past and its causes hasn't yet begun. It is a real obstacle to true forgiveness as the only guarantee of long-term peace and stability. Attitudes towards minorities and inter-ethnic relations have special place in it - ranging from the fact that ignoring minority issues and minority rights may lead to new conflicts to the situation where adequate minority treatment may aid in peace and normalization process. Approaches to these problems are still very different and may be seen as, on one hand, social relations with still present war trauma and, on the other, new, moderate and unburdened actions.

Although witness to chaotic events, the region still doesn't understand their causes and doesn't show enough will to overcome them.

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I BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

1. International relations in FBiH – CONFLICTS REPLACED BY OFFENCES

Namir Ibrahimović

Although there are no physical conflicts among the members of different constituent nation ethnic communities, we still cannot speak about inter-ethnic reconciliation. Say, in Stolac, after the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed and first Bosniaks' returns happened, numerous conflicts have been recorded. They were mostly related to the beginning of reconstruction works on the mosque in town centre, which was thoroughly devastated during the war. Croats claimed that a church existed in that place before the arrival of Ottoman Turks, and that the mosque was built on its base. In addition, numerous armed attacks were recorded, targeting the houses of returnees. Today, Croats and Bosniaks live side by side: there are shops, café-bars, chemists' shops, bus-lines used by Croats, as well as there shops, café-bars, chemists' shops, bus-lines used by Bosniaks.

2. Bosniaks and Croats “with their own identity, on their own land” in Republika Srpska – SECURITY SITUATION IS BETTER, BUT PROBLEMS PERSIST

Katarina Panić

Security situation and the implementation of property laws remain two areas with the most positive shifts realised in terms of the rights of Bosniaks and Croats, who are *de jure* constitutive nations, but *de facto* remain minority nations in the smaller Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity. Nevertheless, this does not mean that all problems are solved.

3. Srđan Dizdarević, the President of Helsinki Committee for BiH – THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL STATE

Radenko Udovičić

“At the moment we have three nationalist blocks, which are the populist nationalist movements. We have one opposition that is, conditionally speaking, social-democratic, and which is more attractive for - don't take it literally - those who do not regard themselves as nationalists, but less attractive by its social-democrat ideas and profile. What emerges is a number of small parties that cannot be placed anywhere”.

II CROATIA

1. REALIZATION OF MINORITY RIGHTS AS CONFLICT DETERRENT

Dr. Sinisa Tatalovic

Escalation of national problems on south-east and east of Europe during the past decade has shown that ignoring and neglecting national minorities' issues and aspirations can lead to difficult and long-term regional crises and conflicts. These issues remain a threat in post-conflict countries of south-eastern Europe. In order for them to be neutralized, one needs politics of protection of national minorities, faster democratic and economic development of those areas, strengthening bilateral and multilateral regional cooperation and finding out adequate policies for management of ethnic differences. In meeting this goals, aid of international community and its institutions is unavoidable.

2. YOUNG PEOPLE IGNORING DIVISIONS

Mladen Obrenovic

Vukovar is a symbol of Croatian war suffering and is still in many details ethnically divided town with constant fear of ethnic-based incidents. Many see that the worst problem is that the

atmosphere is shifting to the young people - divided kindergartens, schools, sport clubs, coffee bars... the road to "cementing" divisions and intolerance. However, despite all, it is the young generation that is experiencing growing resistance to such situation. It seems that there are more and more young people who are ready to close the difficult book of history and start building tolerance and life free of war past, trauma and prejudice.

3. REPORTERS WITH BORDERS

Drago Hedl

In the process of peace and normalization of relations in the former Yugoslav countries that have experienced war conflict, border cooperation of neighboring towns has an extremely important spot. In many aspects they really show "examples of positive practice" in normalization of relations. Unfortunately, media that could and should cover and spur these processes are lagging behind real life.

III SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

1. THE ROLE OF MINORITIES IN THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION

By Miroslav Kevezdi

It is a psychological fact that persons who once go through situations of conflict hardly establish the lost confidence again. Minorities weren't, and still aren't able to considerably effect the events which brought them- or still bring them in the position which they do not want.

Minorities don't recognize as their assignment or as a direct interest, the issue of reconciliation. They don't feel consider themselves for the past conflicts, therefore for the members of national minorities the issue of reconciliation is the issue of warring «majorities» and the elites which provoked these conflicts.

The influence which minorities can have in the process of reconciliation happens on a symbolical level. In such way, cultural events in which members of a few national communities participate, become desperately needed places where the atmosphere of creativity, music and art is created.

2. CRITIC OF OWN NATIONALISM LEADS TO FORGIVENESS

Interview with **Vladimir Ilic**, director of the Center for development of civic society in Zrenjanin

Interviewed by **Zoran Novakovic**

In this process, there are a few layers of past being a burden. Victims are simply used to satisfy current events and to realize practical interests. There is one natural, unpleasant, but in the same time understandable tendency to always consider own people as a group of victims, and never of executors.

When conflicts pass and the reconciliation begins, the weaker one is always more willing to it. The truth is always more suitable for the weaker one, and the force for the stronger.

The recipe for reconciliation in the region is simple: to criticize nationalism of one's own nation and to create institutionalized mechanisms for this critics. Above all, treatment of people in the country as citizens of various ethnics, and not as Serbs, Hungarians, Vlach or else. Creating a citizen's country.

3. EVEN SMALL CAN HELP

Interview with **Janko Ramac**, professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. Rusin was born in Kisac and is a citizen of Serbia and Montenegro who doesn't belong to majority nations. **Radoslav Seguljev** talked to him about the role of national minorities in the peace process in the region.

Numerically speaking, we could say that Ruthenians in Vojvodina cannot contribute to the process of reconciliation in Vojvodina. However, there are people who significantly influence their environment and are very influential, therefore they can contribute quite a lot to this process.

Also, during the time of conflict in the beginning of 90-ties, the Association of Ruthanians addressed the authorities of this country but also those in the neighbour countries appealing for reason. The role of the association can be huge in the process of reconcilliation as well. Ruthanian community in Vojvodina has contacts with Ruthanian and Ukraine community in Republic of Croatia, but to make these contacts more fruitful it is necessary to have more contacts with Croatian authorities.