

**OFFICE FOR HUMAN AND MINORITY RIGHTS**  
**The Palace of Serbia**  
Bulevar M. Pupina 2  
11070 Belgrade  
15 March 2013

**Information**  
**on best practice in the application of traditional values in the promotion and protection of**  
**human rights and the respect for human dignity in accordance with the Human Rights Council**  
**Resolution 21/3**

In the Republic of Serbia, there are more than twenty different national minorities and ethnic communities. There is a tradition of fostering a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue between them. Under the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia<sup>1</sup>, encouraging respect for diversity is a special objective, and by taking measures in education, culture and public information the Republic of Serbia promotes understanding, appreciation and respect for differences arising from the specificities of ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity of its citizens.

National councils of national minorities are an organisational form of minority self-government that is a constitutional category in the legal system of the Republic of Serbia. With the adoption of the Law on National Councils of National Minorities<sup>2</sup>, the state transferred a significant part of its competences in the field of official use of language and script, education, information and culture to these minority self-government institutions. The law prescribes an obligation of the state, territorial autonomy or local self-government authorities to consult the council when deciding on issues relating to the official use of language, education, information in the minority language and culture; national minority councils may make contact with the authorities at all levels of government in all matters affecting the rights and the status of a national minority; public powers relating to the official use of language and script, education, culture and information in the languages of national minorities may be conferred upon the councils, and the state will provide the necessary funds for the discharge of such competences. National councils are funded by the Republic of Serbia and AP Vojvodina from their own budgets, as well as by local self-government units. Possibility has been provided for participation of representatives of national minority councils in certain bodies that are important for the protection and improvement of the status of minorities in international cooperation, as well as for their direct participation in decision-making relating to certain issues of importance for the exercise of minority rights. Elections for national councils may be direct or through the electoral assembly. Direct elections for national councils are held if prior to the date when the elections are called more than 50% of the total number of persons belonging to a national minority according to the latest census, reduced by 20%, are entered in the special national minority electoral roll. The special electoral roll is a public document in which records are kept of persons belonging to national minorities who have the right to vote, and these persons are entered into it on voluntary basis. The data from the special electoral roll enjoy special protection in accordance with the Law on the Protection of Personal Data.

National councils of national minorities were elected for the first time at direct elections in 2010: 16 national minorities met the legal requirements for holding direct elections for national councils, and three national minorities elected their national councils through the electoral assembly. The Executive

---

<sup>1</sup> *Official Gazette of RS*, No 98/2006

<sup>2</sup> *Official Gazette of RS*, No 72/2009

Board of the Union of Jewish Communities performs the function of the national council under the Law. National councils of the Albanian, Czech, Ashkali and Slovenian national minorities were elected for the first time.

The funds for financing the work of national councils are allocated from the budget of the Republic of Serbia, budget of the autonomous province and budgets of local self-government units, donations and other revenues. Around EUR 2.2 million were earmarked for the work of national councils from the budget of the Republic of Serbia for 2012, and around EUR 2.3 million for 2013.