The Vojvodina Perspective

Ms Hedvig Morvai[[1]](#footnote-1)

**The Autonomous Region of Vojvodina**

“Owing to a series of natural and civilizational circumstances, Vojvodina was formed as a region with a set of tangible specificities and distinctive social and spiritual designations a long time ago. Despite the fact that, in the 20th century only, this region changed two types of social and economic relations and five states, i.e. administrative-territorial systems, Vojvodina proved that it is characterized by a specific ‘social density substance’, much greater than the one required for the administrative and political recognition of its geographic or economic specificity. Its nature, historical origins, resources and needs are typical of a *European project* in the true sense of the word and, today, it possesses all the capacities needed for what we could call an exemplary European multicultural region.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

In 1918, Vojvodina was incorporated into Serbia, that is, the Yugoslav state at the time. Before that, Vojvodina had been under the direct authority of Hungary, as a part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The idea of a Serbian Duchy originated in the 17th century, specifically in 1690, when Emperor Leopold I promised the Serbs that they would have a “Vojvoda” (Duke), which meant that they would also have a “Vojvodina”, i.e. a Duchy. During World War II, Vojvodina became a huddle of opposing sides, and along with frequent changes of state and political positions “the ethnic map of the region also changed, and the same ethnic and national collectives shifted from majority to minority and vice-versa.”[[3]](#footnote-3) After the Second World War, for the first time, Vojvodina was constituted as a territorial and administrative entity, and as an Autonomous Province reincorporated into Serbia, within Federal Yugoslavia.

With the 1974 Constitution, Vojvodina transitioned to the stage of the so-called “full autonomy“, which lasted until the change of Constitution in 1989, and finally the adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic of Serbia in 1990. In this period, Vojvodina was granted a territorial status almost equivalent to the status of the republics, and possessed independent legislative authority.

With the adoption of Serbia’s new Constitution in 2006, “Vojvodina’s autonomy was deprived of the possibility to exercise the right to its own legislation in the sphere of its original, constitutionally guaranteed authorities, according to the actual needs of the province and of the whole republic, and in line with European regionalization practices and standards.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

In 2009, the Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina was adopted as the highest legal act of the Province. The Constitutional Court passed a decision in 2013, challenging certain provisions of the Statute of the Autonomous Province (AP) of Vojvodina, subsequently declaring these provisions null and void,[[5]](#footnote-5) on grounds that they were not in line with the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. Hence, in May 2014, AP Vojvodina adopted a new Statute.[[6]](#footnote-6)

In the 2014 Report,[[7]](#footnote-7) the Vojvodina Ombudsman stated its position that the Constitutional Court, having assessed the constitutionality of several provisions of the Statute, breached the constitutional principle which stipulates that the achieved level of human and minority rights cannot be reduced. “It does not come as a surprise that the Constitutional Court's decision on non-compliance of the majority of the Statute's provisions with the Constitution was perceived and interpreted by the public not only as the reduction of the achieved level of Vojvodina citizens’ rights, but also as a step towards the abolishment of autonomy.”

As regards the nature of interethnic relations, sociological studies carried out from the 1960s to the 1990s show a European level of multiculturalism, religious and ethnical tolerance, with citizens of Vojvodina demonstrating the highest level of identification with their surrounding and the lowest detachment from other nations, compared to other Yugoslav republics and the Kosovo Province.

The latest major demographic changes in Vojvodina took place during the 1990s conflict that broke out in the former Yugoslavia. Consequently, out of the total number of refugees in Serbia[[8]](#footnote-8), more than one third, specifically 259,719, found shelter in Vojvodina and most of them stayed there. The 2001 and 2011 population Census show a trend of growth of the Serbian population in Vojvodina.[[9]](#footnote-9)

According to the last Census in Serbia (without Kosovo), there are 7,186,862 registered inhabitants. Serbs, as the majority nation, account for 83.3% (5,988,150). The Vojvodina region is characterized by great ethnic diversity in terms of nations, religions, languages and cultures. Out of 1,931,809 inhabitants, Serbs account for two thirds of the population (66.8%), while as many as 10 national minorities participate with over 0.5%. In terms of the number of citizens, Hungarians are the largest minority (13.0%), followed by Slovaks (2.6%), Croats (2.4%), Roma (2.2%), Romanians (1.3%) and Montenegrins (1.2%). Vojvodina has by far the largest number of persons that refrained from declaring their nationality (4.2%).[[10]](#footnote-10)

Such changes to the ethnic structure, coupled with the consequences of the armed conflicts that took place in republics of former Yugoslavia, and finally in Kosovo as well, significantly affect the current interethnic relations in Vojvodina. As stated by the Vojvodina Ombudsman, “[t]he fact that the relations in Vojvodina are also strongly influenced by factors and circumstances outside the Province is another cause for concern of Vojvodina citizens”.[[11]](#footnote-11) In addition, several recent incidents demonstrate an alarming presence of national intolerance and inclination to violence.

**Protection of Human Rights in Serbia and Vojvodina**

The Republic of Serbia, pursuant to Article 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, is a State of Serbian people and all citizens who live in it, based on the rule of law and social justice, principles of civil democracy, human and minority rights and freedoms, and commitment to European principles and values. Human and minority rights are specified under provisions of Section 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The Republic of Serbia enacted a large number of laws and other regulations defining human rights in various specific areas. Serbia is a state party to principal international human rights treaties; it has ratified a number of multilateral treaties and the Republic of Serbia has accepted the authority of the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia specifies under Article 16, Paragraph 2, that generally accepted rules of international law and ratified international treaties shall be an integral part of the legal system in the Republic of Serbia and applied directly. Ratified international treaties must be in accordance with the Constitution. Pursuant to Article 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, human and minority rights guaranteed by the Constitution shall be implemented directly. The Constitution shall guarantee, and as such, directly implement human and minority rights guaranteed by the generally accepted rules of international law, ratified international treaties and laws. Provisions on human and minority rights shall be interpreted to the benefit of promoting values of a democratic society, pursuant to valid international standards in human and minority rights, as well as the practice of international institutions which supervise their implementation.

The Republic of Serbia ratified the most important international documents in the area of protection of national minorities’ rights, including the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Framework Convention), the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Provisions contained in these instruments are difficult to implement directly. That is why the objectives defined in the international documents are attained through the adoption of relevant laws and government policy measures. The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia includes several provisions aimed at the protection of collective and individual rights of national minorities. The Constitutional provisions on national minorities are mainly in line with the provisions of the Framework Convention. However, there are several provisions in the Constitution that should come under criticism, not because they are in conflict with international law, but because they fail to treat the Serbian social reality adequately. Specifically, the Constitution defines the Republic of Serbia as “a state of Serbian people and all citizens who live in it” (Article 1), thus favouring the majority population over national minorities.

Minority rights are also spelled out in bilateral agreements that the Republic of Serbia concluded with Macedonia, Croatia, Romania and Hungary. These documents, which are of a declarative nature, set forth the constitutional and legal obligations of the Republic of Serbia towards national minorities. The agreement with Hungary specifically provides that the signatory countries will strive to return the confiscated or otherwise seized property to national minorities, and religious communities of national minorities and their organizations. Bilateral agreements also envisage the establishment of inter-governmental mixed committees mandated to monitor the implementation of these agreements.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The Serbian Constitution establishes the right of autonomous provinces to guarantee additional rights to national minorities (Article 79). The Statute of AP Vojvodina is even more detailed than the Constitution when it comes to the protection of minority rights. In addition to guaranteeing national equality (Article 6), in Article 7, the Statute defines multilingualism, multiculturalism and multi-confessionalism as ‘a universal value of special importance for AP Vojvodina’ and lays down that ‘all provincial bodies and organizations are required, under their powers and duties, to encourage and help the preservation of multilingualism and cultural heritage of national communities that have traditionally lived in AP Vojvodina, and to implement special measures and activities to facilitate mutual respect and the learning of various languages, cultures and religions in AP Vojvodina’. The Statute guarantees special protection and all rights that are guaranteed to national minorities and national minority persons by the acts of the Republic of Serbia, and it also envisages that AP Vojvodina can ensure additional or supplementary rights (Article 21). In addition to stipulating the representation of national minorities in provincial bodies and organizations proportionate to their representation in the overall population, the Statute lays down the obligation of the AP Vojvodina Government to implement special measures and activities, based on the decision of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina, in order to achieve the proportionate representation in certain bodies and organizations (Article 22).

The institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights includes: the Committee for Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (within the Serbian National Assembly); the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality elected by the National Assembly; the Ombudsman; the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection; the Anti-Corruption Agency.

In the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, following the provincial elections in 2012, a Provincial Secretariat for Education, Administration and National Communities and the Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality have been set up within the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina has a Committee on Gender Equality. An independent and self-reliant body - the Province’s Ombudsman - was established by decision of the Vojvodina Assembly.

Article 23 of the Statute of Vojvodina lays down the institutional forms of self-rule and preservation of identity of national minority persons by establishing the right in certain social areas significant for the preservation of identity, regulated by the Constitution and law. Moreover, the Statue stipulates that the right to self-government in culture, education, information and official use of languages and scripts is exercised through elected national councils. Also, the Statute provides that AP Vojvodina may transfer its founding rights over the educational and cultural institutions it has established to the national councils of national minorities, either partially or entirely, in conformity with the law. AP Vojvodina provides financial resources in its budget for the activities of national councils of national minorities seated in its territory.

**On the Subject of Human Rights, the Most Significant Issue at the Level of the Province is the Status of National Minorities**

What all multicultural societies have in common is the potential threat that, for one reason or another, minority and majority relations might become exacerbated. The minority issue is originally linked to the status of national minorities. Today, the international protection of minority rights is enshrined in several acts[[15]](#footnote-15), and it is best implemented in Europe, where special emphasis is placed on the preservation of minority languages, religion, culture, origin, education, media and political participation. “In that respect, there are five major rights of ethnic groups: (1) right to survival; (2) right to equality; (3) right to adequate participation in political decision-making; (4) right to free use of the mother tongue for private and public purposes; (5) right to own institutions.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

The status of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia is governed by the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities.[[17]](#footnote-17) Under the terms of this Law (Article 2, Paragraph 1) a national minority is defined as “a group of citizens of the Republic of Serbia sufficiently representative, although in a minority position on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, belonging to an autochthonous group of the population with a lasting and firm connection with the Republic of Serbia and possessing some distinctive features, such as language, national or ethnic belonging, origin or religion, which differentiate it from the majority of the population, and its members should show their concern for the preservation of their common identity, including culture, tradition, language or religion.” The Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities introduced into the legal system the national minorities’ National Councils as a form of cultural autonomy of national minorities and functional decentralization. Under Article 19, Paragraph 1, the Law stipulates that persons belonging to national minorities can elect national councils for the purpose of exercising their right to self-governance in the fields of the use of language and script, education, media and culture. The National Councils are entitled by the Law to participate in allocation of budgetary funds for national minorities based on public tenders for supporting programmes and projects in the fields of culture, education, information and official use of language and script.

In January 2014, the Constitutional Court passed a decision declaring several provisions of the Law on National Councils entirely or partially non-compliant with the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. On that occasion, the Vojvodina Ombudsman conducted surveyed the opinion of competent minority self-government bodies on the changes of the Law.[[18]](#footnote-18) The results of the survey showed that national councils predominantly exercised their powers in the area of education, followed by the area of official usage of language and scripts, and finally in the area of culture. The lowest level of activities of national councils was recorded in the area of information. The survey led to the conclusion that the concept of activities and powers of national councils is inadequate and not fully applicable to all national councils. Following the processing and analysis of data, the Vojvodina Ombudsman provided recommendations to improve of minority rights practices and protection, as well as for the revision of legislation in this area.

In May 2014, the Law on Amendments to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities was passed and elections of national minority members were held in October of the same year for the national councils of the Albanian, Ashkali, Bosniak, Bulgarian, Bunjevac, Vlach, Greek, Egyptian, Hungarian, German, Roma, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Slovene, Ukrainian and Czech national minorities. According to data from the Report on Elections for National Councils, adopted by the National Electoral Committee, voter turnout was recorded at 37.63%. The poor turnout indicates that national minority persons failed to recognize the national councils as their representatives in the previous four years. The problems with the implementation of the Law on National Councils of National Minorities are a consequence of the lack of harmonization of this law with other laws, of the insufficient accuracy of certain provisions of the law, and of the failure to regulate certain issues. The national councils are partly responsible for this state of affairs. Some cases of abuse of statutory powers, unauthorized spending of budget funds and the significant influence of political parties on the national councils have had a negative effect on public opinion.

In their attempts to ensure the consistent enforcement of the law, the national minority councils recognized a partner in the Vojvodina Ombudsman, which is reflected in the large number of complaints that the national councils filed with independent bodies, and the number of recommendations that these bodies directed to the authorities.

In March 2013, Serbia sent its third Periodical Report to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. The overall conclusion of the Advisory Committee is that Serbia has invested substantial efforts to ensure the observation of national minority rights and development of anti-discrimination policies. However, a comprehensive and strategic approach to the integration of national minorities into Serbian society is still missing, and interethnic relations remain an area of concern. Xenophobia and societal intolerance of again minority groups, including racist attacks, are still present in the Serbian society. The Committee emphasized that participation of national minorities in the public and political life is still insufficient, that it is extremely difficult for national minorities to be represented in the National Assembly of Serbia and that the implementation of the right to use minority languages is not applied consistently throughout Serbia. In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, teaching in minority languages also remains a challenge.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The Roma population is one of the most vulnerable social groups in the Republic of Serbia; therefore, the State takes necessary measures aimed at strengthening and improving the status of the Roma national minority. The Republic of Serbia joined a regional programme for the improvement of the status of Roma in Central and Southeastern Europe titled *The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015*.

The Novi Sad-based Roma Inclusion Office was established in 2006 by virtue of the Decision of the Provincial Assembly of Vojvodina, and mandated to implement the Action Plan for Roma integration, and develop and implement the programmes aimed at improving the status of Roma in the areas of education, health care, employment, housing, human and other rights. The Roma Integration Council of AP Vojvodina was set up as a working body of the Executive Council of AP Vojvodina, and mandated to: initiate measures and activities for integration of Roma in AP Vojvodina; present its views on measures and activities taken so far; cooperate with the National Council of the Roma National Minority; and perform other tasks with the aim of improving the general status of Roma in AP Vojvodina.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The *Serbia Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2013*, published by the Embassy of the United States of America in Serbia, concludes that the most serious problems in the human rights domain recorded in the reporting year were discrimination and social violence against minority groups, in particular against the Roma minority. Numerous observers noted the existence of a climate of hostility toward members of national and ethnic minorities, who – according to the 2011 census figures – constituted 16.7 percent of the country’s population and included, in order of size, ethnic Hungarians, Roma, Bosniaks, Croats, Slovaks, Vlachs, Romanians, Bulgarians, Albanians, Ashkali, Egyptians, and others. The Report further notes that Serbia has taken some steps to counter violence and discrimination against minorities. The stand-alone government office for Human and Minority Rights engaged in work with minority communities. Civic education classes, offered by the government as an alternative to religion courses in secondary schools, included information on minority cultures and multi-ethnic tolerance.[[21]](#footnote-21)

**The NGO Sector in Serbia and Vojvodina**

Freedom of association is granted by the Serbian Constitution. The legal frame for existence and functioning of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Serbia is organized in detail. The Law on Associations (2009) and the Law on Endowments and Foundations (2010) are considered to be the most up-to-date laws in this field. The new Law on Accounting (2013) has predicted an easier procedure of financial reporting, accommodated to the needs of the sector.

According to the data of the Serbian Business Registers Agency (SBRA), in charge of registering CSOs, there were more than 24,000 registered associations and over 600 foundations and endowments registered in Serbia by the end of November 2014,[[22]](#footnote-22) from which the majority of CSOs are based in Vojvodina (36%), and then in Belgrade (28%), while others are spread relatively evenly over Western, Central, Eastern and Southeast Serbia.

Civil society in Serbia is very varied compared to primary area of activities, their date of foundation size, budget and geographic area. Most of associations work in the largest cities. In just several of the central municipalities in the City of Belgrade 5,658 associations are registered, in Novi Sad 1,886, and in Nis 4,365.

Civil society is relatively young, with majority of organizations formed in the 2000s, with an obvious rise in numbers of founded CSOs in the past few years since the resources from the EU Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) funds became available. Organizations delivering social services, some of which dating back as far as World War I (47%) and business/professional and other associations (26%) were mostly founded before 1990; taking into account that on average the lowest number of organizations were founded in the period 1990-2000, one may presume that at that time there were no preferences in the primary field of work. The CSOs dealing with healthcare (59%), then law, advocacy and politics (55%), and education and research (53%) were mainly established in the period 2001-2009. More organizations dealing with development and housing were established after 2010 (39%), than was the case with other sectors.

“The majority of NGOs primarily deal with social services, culture, media and recreation, and environment. The reasons contributing to the choices NGOs make as to their primary field of work differ widely, although three reasons dominate: an interest in a specific field, the capacities of the NGO and priority for finding a solution for a specific problem in society.”[[23]](#footnote-23) When considering methods of financing, the highest percentage originates from financing based on projects and membership fees, while the lowest comes from gifts and voluntary contributions; however, there are big variations between organizations engaged in different fields. Financing sources are mainly stated to be self-financing (rendering services with remuneration, membership fees, own assets), financing by local authorities and financing by international donors. Almost one half of CSOs evaluate the financial situation of their organizations as bad.[[24]](#footnote-24) According to a report published this year, the legal framework for financial viability and sustainability of civil society organizations is still not favourable and in line with EU standards.[[25]](#footnote-25) The situation of CSO financing in Serbia is still difficult, which is why strategic thinking is necessary about the future of financing with a special focus on domestic sources, in the context of European integration.

The image of civil society is improving, even though it is still negative in many respects. Conclusions of the public opinion survey conducted in 2014[[26]](#footnote-26) show that when mentioning NGOs first reactions are more negative than positive. This is the result of many factors, including the key lack of public understanding of the terms “’non-governmental organization’’ or “civil society organization’’, a lack of public acknowledgement of diversity/differences of CSOs and their activities, including a lack of acknowledgement of CSO contributions to changes in the society in Serbia by the government, and poor reporting from the media. CSOs have not been able to increase direct contact with citizens, and weak skills of CSOs in the field of public relations contribute to the overall bad image of civil society.[[27]](#footnote-27)

The Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society is the main institutional mechanism for the support of developing the dialogue between the government and CSOs through offering support to its institutions in understanding and recognizing the role of CSOs in policy-shaping and decision-making processes. However, they are often used as the only channel of communication between the two sectors, which makes its work and role more difficult. All this indicates a need for developing a mechanism for direct, meaningful and timely inclusion of CSOs in policy-shaping and decision-making processes. One of the major challenges that ought to be overcome relates to the fact that CSOs are included only in the final phases of writing drafts of laws and policies, in the stage which leaves little room for changes, and even then without receiving enough information in advance and feedback on what was included in the final proposal.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The Ombudsman in his annual reports regularly mentions the excellent cooperation established with numerous CSOs and initiatives. CSOs are considered as “partners in the protection of human rights”. Furthermore, the quality of cooperation is present through the inclusion of CSO representatives in the work of different advisory bodies. A network of partner organizations and experts has been established that allows for up-to-date exchange of information and joint work that helps Ombudsman in carrying out his duties.

The Provincial Government has eleven Secretariats and most of them declare “cooperation with non-governmental organizations” as part of their regular activities. Most of Secretariats announce open calls for proposals for funding of Vojvodina-based CSOs. There are also examples of joint projects: “Towards comprehensive system for suppression of violence against women in the AP Vojvodina” implemented by the Provincial Secretariat for Labour, Employment and Gender Equality in cooperation with local CSOs, funded by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).[[29]](#footnote-29)

Some other cooperation examples include the IZVOR initiative, where the Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre (NSHC)[[30]](#footnote-30) in cooperation with other NGOs developed the project “Initiative for Volunteerism Legislation in the Republic of Serbia” with the objective to contribute to the development of volunteerism in Serbia, and therefore to the overall civil society development. Through this joint effort with the Secretariat for Work, Employment and Gender Equality of the Vojvodina Province, the Secretariat for Sport and Youth of the Vojvodina Province and the Secretariat for Local Administration and Inter-Municipal Cooperation of the Vojvodina Province, volunteerism was promoted and all relevant stakeholders mobilized to participate in creating a positive legal environment for development of volunteerism in our country.

In cooperation of the Provincial Directorate for Gender Equality and the Autonomous Women’s Centre, in the framework of the AP Vojvodina Strategy against the gender-based violence, a measure was planned to establish a unique registration of domestic violence. A working group was created consisting of experts with different profiles. They created a realistic model of registering cases of family violence and in partners’ relationships, as well as development of the inter-institutional exchange of data about the measures taken by the relevant institutions in the given cases. According to the CSO representatives it was a real pleasure to work with experts who understood the notion of domestic violence and contributed to the maximum. The provincial Secretariat provided all the organizational support to the project.

Another good example of successful cooperation is the “Action Plan for Youth in AP Vojvodina for the period 2011-2014”. This was a comprehensive consultative process that included the following stakeholders: the Assembly and the Government of AP Vojvodina, relevant Provincial Secretariats, representatives of civil society, the local self-government, local Offices for Youth, institutions, media and all other interested young people (through public discussions). This Action Plan was adopted by the end of 2010 by the Assembly of AP Vojvodina.

However, by analyzing different reports and feedbacks of the CSO representatives, one can conclude that the relationship between the government and CSOs is still marked by fragmented cooperation, lack of government understanding for civil society, and a selective approach towards individual CSOs.

**The Role of NGOs**

The most important non-governmental organizations in Vojvodina, regardless of their sphere of work, reflect the needs of Vojvodina as a European multi-ethnic region through their activities and, as such, they are recognized by the general public. A part of these organizations established a coalition of non-governmental organizations in 2006 called *Gradjanska Vojvodina* (Civic Vojvodina). This coalition incorporated the Centre for Regionalism, the Civil Society Development Centre, the Independent Association of Vojvodina Journalists, the Pannonia Civic Fund, the Pančevo Civic Action, Open Liceum, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, the Green Network of Vojvodina, the Vojvodina Civic Centre and the Centre for Intercultural Communication.

As this list reveals, these are organizations from different spheres, such as democratization and decentralization, protection of human and minority rights, environment, and journalism, but they all work together and react to anything that might disrupt interethnic relations in Vojvodina, or that is likely to undermine or reduce its right to autonomy, in other words, they strive to affirm Vojvodina as a modern European region. Unfortunately, the provincial authorities provide little or no support for their endeavours. *Gradjanska Vojvodina* is an informal coalition and, because it receives no financial support from any foundation or institution, all of its activities are performed by its members on a voluntary basis. It was established in October 2006 at an anti-referendum campaign organized in opposition to the adoption of the new Serbian Constitution, specifically to its contents and the manner in which it was adopted, and ever since, the organization implemented a series of actions or activities, most notably: (a) The anti-fascist rally on 7 October 2007, in protest of the neo-Nazi march on the streets of Novi Sad announced by the neo-Nazi organization *Nacionalni Stroj* (National Front). After the National Front activists attacked the anti-fascist rally, the ringleaders of this organization were arrested. Over 5,000 citizens attended the rally at the invitation of *Gradjanska Vojvodina*. (b) The “solidarity *burek[[31]](#footnote-31)*”– in the wake of the 17 March 2004 pogrom of Kosovo Serbs by Albanians, there was a series of attacks on Albanian-owned shops in towns across Vojvodina. The “Two Brothers” bakery in Sombor was the worst-hit: hooligans first demolished it, and then began distributing free bread outside the bakery in an attempt to permanently destroy the business by having citizens boycott the bakery. To put a stop to these chauvinistic acts, which the authorities tolerated for days, about thirty *Gradjanska Vojvodina* activists visited the bakery for a “solidarity *burek*”. The action attracted significant media coverage, which prompted the competent authorities to finally take action, press charges against the perpetrators, and subsequently the bakery’s clients came back. (c) From time to time, roundtables are organized, primarily concerning the issue of minority rights protection, and issues related to the preservation and advancement of Vojvodina’s autonomy. (d) Through press releases, the coalition regularly reacts to negative statements made by officials or developments that jeopardize Vojvodina’s multi-ethnic nature or autonomy.

In Vojvodina there are a significant number of non-governmental organizations engaged in the protection and practice of human rights. They work together with domestic and international organizations/institutions to provide direct legal counsel to citizens, analyze existing data and monitor typical cases of human rights violations, with the aim of changing existing laws and by-laws.

Very often, non-governmental organizations take part in discussions and consultations on current national minority rights issues (education, information, culture, official use of language and script, participation of national minorities in Serbia’s EU association process), with national minority experts, representatives of different institutions as the Delegation of the European Union in Serbia, the Office for Human and Minority Rights, with representatives of provincial and local authorities, national minority councils, and the Interethnic Relations Council.

Vojvodina’s Ombudsman stated in his report that “[t]he practicing and protection of human rights is affected by multiple factors: by the economic situation in the country, the regulation of the legal system and regulatory harmonization, and in parallel with these, by an independent, professional end efficient judiciary, a professional, unbiased and efficient administration, and excellent institutions. These also include the nature of the general and, specifically, the political culture, democratic tradition, and public awareness of the importance of human rights and of a critical public opinion. In addition to all this, the exercise of human rights is also affected by partisan rifts and conflicts, increasing social polarization, which is a consequence of the prolonged and unsuccessful transition and privatization process, as well as a set of other factors, including the development of civil society organizations, in particular those engaged in human rights protection.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

**Vojvodina: A European Region**

After the fruitful period of cultural and social interaction among its different ethnic communities during the times of communist Yugoslavia, Vojvodina suffered from the consequences of the dissolution of the country during the 1990s. These times were full of mistrust, inter-ethnic conflicts, degradation of national minorities (the feeling of minorities as being second class citizens), ghettoization, emigration flows. Building trust and a sense of belonging to the wider Vojvodina community, regardless of the ethnic background, and the integration of minorities into the daily social, political and economic life, remain a major challenge for the Province’s citizens and leaders.

Despite these and other major challenges, Vojvodina continues to build the identity of an open European region. Given that geography, historical tradition, demographic characteristic, economy, culture and, of course, the character of the political institutions and processes are, each on its own, a sufficient condition to call a territorial entity a region, then, in the case of Vojvodina we have what we can call a combined, cumulative effect of all of the aforesaid aspects, which infuse this bit of the Pannonia plane with the identity of precious unity in diversity.[[33]](#footnote-33)

In the context of the extremely complex relations between the new states that emerged from the breakup of Yugoslavia, and in the process of reconciliation among the region’s nations, (former opposing sides in the armed conflicts of the 1990s), Vojvodina emerged as a beacon of tolerance and unification. The various initiatives that span across the borders of Serbia and the wider Southeast European region were launched by the various stake-holders in Vojvodina, in most cases non-governmental organizations. Thus, the Centre for Regionalism, an organization based in Novi Sad, initiated a tripartite cooperation between the city administrations of Novi Sad (Vojvodina), Osijek (Croatia) and Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina), in collaboration with the NGOs in these cities. Subsequently, the tripartite cooperation expanded to include other cities from the former Yugoslavia, bringing together local political leaders, administrations and citizens within a network of cooperation, sharing and communication.

The biggest music festival in the region, EXIT, was created in reaction to Slobodan Milošević’s regime, initially as a musical and cultural campaign to topple the regime, and subsequently as a place that brings together youth from across the Balkans and Europe. Many people saw EXIT and Novi Sad as an opportunity to meet with peers from the former Yugoslavia, and to build trust and cooperation through music, fun and social campaigns, which are also present at the festival. According to an EXIT poll of its visitors, the fact that Novi Sad (Vojvodina) is the venue of the festival had a significant impact on their decision to set foot in Serbia, some of them for the first time after the armed conflicts in this region. In 2004, for the first time, the festival managed to ensure the presence of a number of visitors from Kosovo, by obtaining entry “passes” to Serbia from the Foreign Affairs minister at the time.

Vojvodina, as a European region, has the opportunity to develop contacts with other regions and take part in various cooperation programmes. In recent years, the “Danube Strategy” initiatives are gaining importance[[34]](#footnote-34). Today, Vojvodina could have a major role in Serbia’s European integration process. Unfortunately, Vojvodina’s potentials in this process remain untapped for political reasons, in fact, various efforts were even stifled. The new Serbian Constitution has significantly reduced Vojvodina’s pro-European capacities, and the status of the Province remains far removed from the European regionalization practices and standards. Serbia’s modernization will require the solving of the “Vojvodina issue” by seeking a functional constitutional and political system in Serbia, which will envisage decentralization through autonomous provinces as an important prerequisite of democracy.[[35]](#footnote-35)

**Applicable Examples from Vojvodina to Morocco**

In both countries (Serbia and Morocco) the NGO sector is relatively young. That usually means a fragile civil society with unsustainable mechanisms and not optimized structures and influence on social developments. According to existing reports, the legal environment of both countries is enabling for civil society organizations.

On the other hand, violation of rights and freedoms exist and they remain constant challenges for these societies and for their NGO sector. Furthermore, with the growth of the sector and its new dynamism, it is necessary for it to develop efficient internal mechanisms for transformative influence on development of civil society; what enables coherence in action and focus on the most urging needs of the society and what encourages self-correction, transparency and accountability.

Due to some similarities between the civil society scene, historical developments and day-to-day challenges, examples of NGO activities and approaches from Vojvodina could be applicable to the situation in Morocco with its autonomy initiative for the Sahara Region:

1. Dealing with the Past and Looking to the Future

In the period of 1991–1994, the majority of peace NGOs in Serbia were established in Vojvodina. The consequences of wars in ex-Yugoslavia and the culminations of ethnic tensions in the region became a strong drive for social activism. According to data from 1981 the majority of mixed marriages in ex-Yugoslavia existed in Serbia (36%) out of what the most were in Vojvodina (27%). Women organizations were in many cases initiators of peace and human rights NGOs. During the conflicts, these organizations were engaged in anti-war and peace activities, developing initiatives which were focused on solving conflicts by education, work with refugees, establishing SOS hotlines for the victims of ethnic conflicts. At a later stage, it was necessary that these organizations transform in order to face the challenges of the post-conflict period. It was important, that new initiatives emerge what are dealing with the past, however in the context of the future. Dealing with reconciliation became counter-productive by only insisting on war crimes and the injustices of the past. Examples where natural interests as connecting factors and creating joint future plans were in focus proved to be a successful follow up to the previous peace and anti-war activities. The frozen conflict of over 37 years in the Sahara region will leave a number of highly sensitive issues behind in that region. Vojvodina could provide the example of some smart initiatives on building trust and evoking interests what can bring peoples together in creating a common future.

1. Focus on Youth

The establishment of youth organizations, and those dealing with youth was another characteristic of the development of NGO scene in Vojvodina. This fragile social group needs a special attention, especially in conflict areas. The active and creative engagement of youngsters via “Open clubs” of the Soros Foundation, school exchange projects, intercultural dialogue of the youth, cooperation of student organizations and other initiatives played an important role in filling the gaps in societal needs not answered by the authorities. The EXIT Festival, as described above, represents a successful phenomenon what grew out of youth activism and it provides a space for cooperation, communication, exchange and for developing new ideas as well as working on issues relevant for the young people of today as innovation, youth entrepreneurship and connectivity. The problems of young people in Morocco and Sahara are topped with challenges as alternative options like joining jihadist and military groups represent for many. A broad engagement of youth with devoting special budget lines for youth initiatives of civil society is one way in fighting the dangers of negative alternatives for young people and for supporting their active involvement in the society.

1. Arts and Culture as Tools

One way of approaching reconciliation efforts and activities focused on communication and dialogue is engaging arts and culture as tools for crossing boundaries and creating links among confronted parties and divided societies. Vojvodina with its multicultural identity has a good practice in developing initiatives which use culture for achieving social cause. These initiatives are usually very successful in integrating young people. The format of entertaining festivals (like the EXIT Festival) and other attractive content can reach out to a wider public with socially relevant messages.

1. Political Education

Education and political education have been recognized and put as objectives for a number of NGOs in Vojvodina. Special focus is on journalists/media representatives, young (potential) leaders, youth of political parties, local/municipality leaders, and civil society representatives. On the one hand as corrective to the education system and on the other handle as filling the gaps in areas for which NGOs show more sensitivity, well-established programmes have been developed and financed via massive support from foreign donors. The results of such initiatives are visible only after years, whereby nurturing the networks of those who were exposed to such projects is another very important segment for achieving impact and it represents a special challenge in the process.

1. Regional Cooperation

Civil society initiatives are very important in promoting a “culture of regional cooperation”. The development of Vojvodina as autonomous region is a lot depending on its connections to other regions and neighbouring countries. In many cases NGO initiatives from Vojvodina were the triggers for launching very important activities of national and regional relevance (as the above mentioned project of the Novi Sad-based Centre for Regionalism). Those initiatives proved that if there are no legal prohibitions, NGOs should use their strength of creativity, openness, flexibility and tolerance and reach out to counterparts with ideas and proposals for fostering cross-border and regional cooperation for strengthening connections and interest based links what will advance their regional economy, political relations of their region and countries and better understanding of their people.

There is a great potential for such cooperation in the Sahara region with its neighbours.

**Case Study:**

**The Hungarian National Minority in Serbia Achieved the Highest Degree of Cultural Autonomy in Vojvodina**

**Hungarians** (253,900, i.e. 3.5%) are the largest national minority in Serbia. They are concentrated almost entirely in Vojvodina; in fact, as many as 251,100 (98.9%) of their total number inhabit this region. They account for 13.0% of the total population of Vojvodina and, quantitatively, they are the most relevant minority group in this region. The geographic distribution of the Hungarian minority group is characterized by a manifest ethnic homogenization trend, with a high degree of geographic concentration in northern Vojvodina, which is where the municipalities with Hungarian ethnic majority are located. The Hungarian population is characterized by a continuing decline, specifically by almost 150,000 inhabitants in the last 25 years, which is the result of a negative population growth and migration (especially in the 1990s).[[36]](#footnote-36)

The cultural and ethnic identity of Hungarians strengthened in the 1990s. Their awareness of the need to unite and self-organize increased in particular as they felt collectively threatened (wartime conscription, hyperinflation, loss of jobs, influx of refugees). They felt degraded by the radical nationalist outbursts around them. Their answer was: political self-organization; drawing attention to their history and culture; the fierce desire to preserve their mother tongue (to such an extent that some of them even harboured an aversion to learning Serbian); approximation to the Catholic Church; and emigration to Hungary and other countries.

In the context of the ongoing efforts to preserve Vojvodina’s autonomy, the Vojvodina Hungarian minority’s efforts and the success in achieving a degree of national autonomy within the province is striking. This success is most evident in the functions of the Hungarian National Council and the role of the leading political parties of Vojvodina Hungarians within the system of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the Republic of Serbia. With the establishment of the National Council and the election of its members, a process was triggered to fill form with real content on three main tracks: ensuring funding for the functioning of the Council; expanding the powers and mandate; and establishing a network of affiliated institutions. These efforts were facilitated and successfully implemented through the mediation of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians,[[37]](#footnote-37) as the ruling political party at provincial level.

While the National Council only had a few million dinars[[38]](#footnote-38) in 2003, this amount grew tenfold by 2008. As regards its jurisdictions, it is worth mentioning that the Province devolved two areas of activity to the National Council: the Council was granted the mandate to make decisions with respect to official Hungarian place names in Vojvodina, and its second major role was to decide on the allocation of funds of the Autonomous Province to Hungarian non-governmental organizations.

A network of institutions established by the Council plays a particularly important role when it comes to strengthening the autonomy of Vojvodina Hungarians. The Council has taken over a large number of leading institutions from state jurisdiction, either fully or in the capacity of co-founder. Among these institutions are publishing and printing company Magyar Szó [[39]](#footnote-39), the Forum publishing house, the Vojvodina Hungarians Cultural Institute in Senta and the European Collegium. In addition to that, the Council also has powers in the field of education, culture and information in the Hungarian language, in proclaiming Hungarian national holidays and in the right to comment and take part in relevant forums.

A Civic Advisory Committee was established within the Council in 2010. This is an important step in integrating the civil society sector into the work of the National Council, particularly because it immediately led to the drafting of the Civic Strategy of Vojvodina Hungarians 2012–2018. The goal of this Strategy is to trace the roadmap to developing the Hungarian civil society sector and to ensure the programming of funding, both from domestic and cross-border sources,[[40]](#footnote-40) to support the implementation of the Strategy. The importance of the Hungarian civil society sector is also reflected in the growing recognition of this sector by the political leaders of Vojvodina Hungarians, also demonstrated by the fact that, in the 2010 National Council elections, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians appeared on a joint list with the civil society organizations.[[41]](#footnote-41)

An analysis carried out by the National Council indicates that there are over 500 Hungarian non-governmental organizations currently operating in Vojvodina, most of which were founded between 2000 and 2007. Evidently, most of the organizations were founded in the years that saw the rise of certain stimuli that motivated the Hungarian minority to self-organize. Local organizations account for 40% of the total number, while the rest are equally distributed among the regional, provincial and national levels. The areas covered by the Association are primarily preservation of tradition and culture, education and training, information, culture, youth, European integration, cross-border cooperation, environmental and social issues.

A poll conducted by the National Council in 2013 shows that citizens (the Hungarian national minority) particularly value the work of and results achieved by the Council in the sphere of education, and that they believe that ensuring primary education in the Hungarian language is extremely important in a context where Hungarian is the mother tongue of 20% of primary school children attending Serbian-language schools.

Also, most respondents value the efforts of the Council in the field of higher education, where attempts are being made to increase the number of Hungarian students through scholarship programmes, while at the same time reducing the number of those who would otherwise continue their studies in Hungary, possibly never to return. Results in the field of culture and information in the Hungarian language have also gained recognition, while those related to the official use of languages had the poorest ranking.[[42]](#footnote-42)

Why is it that the Vojvodina Hungarians are the one minority that managed to achieve such an outstanding degree of national autonomy within the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, unlike the Hungarian minority in Rumania, Slovakia or Ukraine? The answer lies in several factors characteristic for Vojvodina and Serbia: (1) the specificities and traditions of Yugoslavia and Vojvodina, where in the 1960s Vojvodina enjoyed the status of a multi-ethnic province, with legislative, judiciary and tax authorities; decentralization, equality among the nations and the right to self-rule were among the universal values; a positive attitude towards collective and minority rights was built on the foundations of this tradition, and this is why issues such as the use of minority languages, representation of minorities in public authorities and similar topics are not a “taboo” in Vojvodina; (2) an atmosphere of trust was created between the minority and majority representatives after the fall of the regime, owing to their joint struggle against Slobodan Milošević’s rule, which enabled the drafting of the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, envisaging the institution of national minority self-rule, i.e. National Minority Councils; (3) the role of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians in the local, regional and national government since 2001.

“The ensuing conclusion is that three things are extremely important for the achievement of a high level of cultural autonomy:

1. Autonomy will not “rescue” minorities; it is a lengthy process ridden with obstacles, and tangible success is rare;
2. The strengthening of autonomy depends to a great extent on the mutual trust of the majority and minority;
3. To build up autonomy a minority has to have a great capacity for the political achievement of its interests, and the support of the community that it represents. If a national minority lacks political weight it will not be possible to integrate the minority’s autonomy into the national legal system or, alternatively, it will become an instrument for winning points on the foreign policy or national level.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

1. Executive Director of the European Fund for the Balkans, Belgrade. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jovan Komšić, Vojvođansko pitanje u procesu srpske tranzicije (1988 – 2013), (“The Vojvodina issue in the process of Serbia’s transition”), Belgrade: Dan Graf, 2014, pp. 86-87. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jovan Komšić , Vojvođansko pitanje u procesu srpske tranzicije (1988 – 2013), Belgrade: Dan Graf, 2014, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Jovan Komšić , Vojvođansko pitanje u procesu srpske tranzicije (1988 – 2013), Belgrade: Dan Graf, 2014, p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.ustavni.sud.rs/Storage/Global/Documents/Misc/I%D0%A3%D0%BE-360-2009.pdf> (accessed: May 8, 2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. "Sl. list AP Vojvodine", (br. 20/2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.ombudsmanapv.org/riv/attachments/article/1552/Godisnji_izvestaj_PZG_2014.pdf>, 9 (accessed: May 9, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 617.728 according to the census of Commissariat for Refugees of Serbia and Montenegro and UNHCR from 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Jovan Komšić , Vojvođansko pitanje u procesu srpske tranzicije (Vojvodina issue in the process of Serbian transition) (1988–2013), Belgrade: Dan Graf, 2014, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Source: <http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/Popis2011/Nacionalna%20pripadnost-Ethnicity.pdf> (accessed: May 8, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <http://www.ombudsmanapv.org/riv/attachments/article/1552/Godisnji_izvestaj_PZG_2014.pdf>, p. 8 (accessed: May 9, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Through Articles 23-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (A) of the annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. “Ljudska prava u Srbiji 2013 - Pravo, praksa i međunarodni standardi ljudskih prava” ((Human Rights in Serbia 2013 – Jurisdiction, Practice and International Human Rights Standards)), Beogradski Centar za ljudska prava, Biblioteka, Izveštaji, 21, Beograd (2014). Available at: http://www.bgcentar.org.rs/bgcentar/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Ljudska-prava-u-Srbiji-2013.pdf, p. 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Milan Tripkovic*, “Multikulturacija, regionalizacija i integracija u Vojvodini i Srbiji”* (Multiculturalization, regionalization and integration in Vojvodina and Serbia), in Milan Tripkovic (ed) Multikulturna Vojvodina u Evropskim integracijama (Multicultural Vojvodina in European Integration), (Novi Sad: Filozofksi fakultet Novi Sad, 2006), p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Milan Tripkovic*, “Multikulturacija, regionalizacija i integracija u Vojvodini i Srbiji”* (Multiculturalization, regionalization and integration in Vojvodina and Serbia), in Milan Tripkovic (ed) Multikulturna Vojvodina u Evropskim integracijama (Multicultural Vojvodina in European Integration), (Novi Sad: Filozofksi fakultet Novi Sad, 2006), p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. <http://www.ljudskaprava.gov.rs/images/pdf/propisi_i_strategije/zakon_o_zastiti_sloboda_i_prava_nacionalnih_manjina.pdf> (accessed: May 11, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The survey results are published in a special report *Four Years of National Councils of National Minorities*, <http://www.ombudsmanapv.org/riv/attachments/article/1436/4%20god_nac_saveta_final_site.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. “Ljudska prava u Srbiji 2014 - pravo, praksa i međunarodni standardi ljudskih prava” (Human Rights in Serbia 2014 – Jurisdiction, Practice and International Human Rights Standards) Beogradski Centar za ljudska prava, Biblioteka, Izveštaji, 24, Beograd (2015), 274. Available at: <http://www.bgcentar.org.rs/bgcentar/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Ljudska-prava-u-Srbiji-2014.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See more at: <http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session3/RS/A_HRC_WG6_3_SRB_1_Serbia_E.pdf> (accessed on: May 8, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. <http://serbian.serbia.usembassy.gov/izvestaji/izvestaj-o-stanju-ljudskih-prava-u-srbiji-2013.html> (accessed on May 8, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. <http://udruzenja.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ENG.pdf>, 10, (accessed: May 8, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. <http://civilnodrustvo.gov.rs/media/2012/10/ASSESSMENT-OF-THE-SITUATION-IN-THE-CIVIL-SOCIETY-ORGANIZATIONS-CSOs-SECTOR-IN-SERBIA.pdf>, 8 (accessed on: May 9, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See more in <http://civilnodrustvo.gov.rs/media/2012/10/ASSESSMENT-OF-THE-SITUATION-IN-THE-CIVIL-SOCIETY-ORGANIZATIONS-CSOs-SECTOR-IN-SERBIA.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. <http://udruzenja.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ENG.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The research was conducted by the Bureau for Social Research, Institute for Sustainable Communities and Pro Positive Agency. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Balkan Civil Society Acquis, Strengthening the Advocacy and Monitoring Potentials and Capacity of CSOs – Serbia Country Report 2014, <http://udruzenja.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ENG.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. <http://udruzenja.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ENG.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Dubravka Velat, *Report on Initial Assessment of Serbia Governmental Institutions’ Practices for Consultations with CSOs*, for TACSO Serbia Office, Belgrade 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Information taken from the NHSC website, IZVOR Initiative, <http://www.nshc.org.rs/eng_nshc/eng_izvor.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Burek is a traditional Balkan region pastry. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. <http://www.ombudsmanapv.org/riv/attachments/article/1552/Godisnji_izvestaj_PZG_2014.pdf>, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Jovan Komšić, “*Vojvođansko pitanje u procesu srpske tranzicije” (Vojvodina issue in the process of Serbian transition)* (1988–2013), Belgrade: Dan Graf, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. <http://www.dunavskastrategija.rs/sr/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See more in Jovan Komšić, “*Vojvođansko pitanje u procesu srpske tranzicije” (Vojvodina issue in the process of Serbian transition)* (1988–2013), Belgrade: Dan Graf, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Nada Raduški, „*Etnički procesi i nacionalne manjine u Srbiji po popisu iz 2011. godine“* *(Ethnic Processes And National Minorities in Serbia According to the Cenzus of 2011)*, Avaliable at: <http://www.nspm.rs/kuda-ide-srbija/etnicki-procesi-i-nacionalne-manjine-u-srbiji-po-popisu-2011.-godine.html#_ftn2> (accessed: May 8, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The most important political party of the Hungarian national minority. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. One million Serbian dinars today equal ca. 9,285 US dollars. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Leading daily paper in the Hungarian language. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Hungary supports Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring states through a special budget programme. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Vajdasági Magyar Civil Stratégia (2012–2018), Magyar Nemzeti Tanács (Szabadka, 2012). Available at: <http://www.mnt.org.rs/sites/default/files/attachments/vajdasagi_magyar_civil_strategia.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. In addition to the Serbian language, AP Vojvodina bodies have introduced equal official use of Hungarian, Slovak, Croat, Romanian and Ruthenian languages and scripts. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Tamás Korhecz, „Autonómia az ábrándok és a valóság mezsgyéjén – Avagy mieért jutott legmesszebb a délvidéki magyarság az autonómia kiépitésében” (Autonomy on the Border of Wishes and Reality – How Did the Hungarian National Miniroty in Vojvodina Advanced the Most in Building its Autonomy Status?). Available at: <http://www.balkancenter.hu/pdf/korhecztamas.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)