

# CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS FROM SOUTHERN SERBIA

**COVID-19 RESPONSE**

**June 26-July 3, 2020**

# INTRODUCTION

## Monitoring of civil society organizations in three municipalities in southern Serbia

The report includes monitoring of civil society organizations in three municipalities in southern Serbia: Bujanovac, Presevo and Vranje. Information is collected in cooperation with local organizations from these three municipalities. Local organizations collect information based on desk research as well as direct contact with other organizations and media in these three municipalities. The information that will be presented in the report refers to general information about the municipality itself, general information about civil society organizations, information about local media, general information related to Covid-19 as well as the response of civil society during the crisis caused by the Covid-19 virus.

These three municipalities are multiethnic communities in southern Serbia, with Albanian, Serb and Roma populations. Since the Albanian national community boycotted the 2011 census, there is no official number of members of the Albanian national minority, but it is estimated that more than 100,000 of them live in southern Serbia. That is why the National Council for the Albanian National Minority is located in Bujanovac.

# PREŠEVO

## Political situation, media and Covid-19

- There is still no data on the number of tested and infected with the Covid-19 virus in the municipality of Preševo. After the worsening of the epidemiological situation in Serbia, the Preševo Health Center warned the citizens on its Facebook page that they must wear protective masks when arriving at that institution.
- At the beginning of July, along with the arrival of news about the difficult situation in the Sandžak area, there was a noticeable increase in panic and fear among the citizens of Preševo, but also a lack of trust in the work of the local health center.
- Local media did not cover the epidemiological situation in Preševo, and the only news that indirectly concerned the pandemic was related to the work, ie the temporary closure of mosques until the situation improves.
- Local and regional media report that the Minister of Justice and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, Selim Selimi and Meliza Haradniaj Stubla are waiting for an official response from the competent authorities of the Republic of Serbia to organize an official visit to the municipality of Preševo. The media state that a meeting with the representatives of the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac is planned during the visit in order to get acquainted with the current situation and needs of the citizens of these municipalities.

# PREŠEVO

## CSO ACTIVITIES

- In the past period, there were no new activities of civil society organizations in Preševo.

# BUJANOVAC

## Political situation, media and Covid-19

- After the repeated elections at certain polling stations held on July 1, the United List of Albanians won enough votes for a third term in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.
- The political situation overshadowed the current coronavirus pandemic, so most of the published news was related to the recent elections and the formation of local authorities, although the epidemiological situation in Bujanovac is dramatic and a state of emergency has been declared.
- The portal [bujanovacke.co.rs](http://bujanovacke.co.rs) published the news on July 2 that the situation with the virus is becoming more complicated and that difficult days await Bujanovac. The health center does not lack medical staff and protective equipment, but the procedures for testing, and especially isolation, under the jurisdiction of the Epidemiological Service of the Institute of Public Health in Vranje, make the already difficult fight against the epidemic much more difficult. 28 cases of Covid-19, three of which died. Three days ago, the Health Center confirmed that three more people were infected with the virus.

# BUJANOVAC

- In Bujanovac, officially three people died from the virus. 684 people have fallen ill in the Pčinja district since the beginning of the epidemic, 545 from Vranje alone, reports Južne vesti. Since the beginning of the epidemic, 22 people from the district have died, the director of the Vranje Institute for Public Health, Svetlana Stojanović, told JV. There are 12 from Vranje, 4 from Surdulica, 3 each from Vladičin Han and Bujanovac and one each from Trgovište and Bosilegrad. Only in Preševo no one has died.
- The head of the municipal administration made a decision to cancel the competition for financing projects in the field of information for 2020 after the chairwoman of the project evaluation commission resigned.

## CSO ACTIVITIES

- Regarding the work of civil society organizations, no new activities were announced this week either, although certain projects are underway, but due to the epidemiological situation and the holding of elections in the municipality of Bujanovac, they have not yet started implementing activities.
- Humanitarian and cultural foundation "Amaneti" in Bujanovac, with the help of citizens and entrepreneurs, collects monetary donations, provides food and other necessary food in order to help a family from Presevo who is in a difficult financial situation. Local entrepreneurs also helped by donating materials for the construction of a family house. In addition to this, other projects to help citizens have been announced, and one of them is the construction of a house in the municipality of Bujanovac for the care of two children living without one parent.

# BUJANOVAC

- The Organization for Development and Democracy and the Association of Young Persons with Disabilities from the South of Serbia started making viziers for the Vranje hospital, at the invitation of the Center for Media Transparency and Social Responsibility. ORD Bujanovac invites everyone who can submit material for production, bearing in mind that these organizations cannot provide a sufficient amount. The invitation points out that the Vranje COVID hospital is also responsible for the municipality of Bujanovac.

# VRANJE

## Political situation, media and Covid-19

- At the suggestion of the Crisis Staff of the city of Vranje, a state of emergency was declared in the area of that city. The decision was preceded by a worsening of the epidemiological situation due to the infection of a large number of sporadic cases. The mayor of Vranje, Slobodan Milenković, stated that for now there will be no restrictions on the working hours of catering facilities, as well as that strict supervision over the implementation of epidemiological measures adopted by the Government will be carried out in Vranje.

# VRANJE

- According to the last section in COVID hospitals in Vranje, a total of 91 patients with confirmed presence of coronavirus were hospitalized, and two people died. When it comes to the clinical picture of patients, it is mostly about "mild and medium forms of bronchopneumonia, while more severe cases are sent to the Clinical Center Nis". A number of patients from Vranje were gathered in Surdulica, while "asymptomatically, even those with a milder clinical picture are sent to home isolation for 14 days." 19 nurses and several doctors were also infected. More of them are in self-isolation, while three doctors are in COVID hospital.
- Out of 85 patients from municipalities from the south of Serbia hospitalized in KC Nis, seven are connected to mechanical ventilation devices and are in a very difficult general condition - according to the Nis health care in the latest report from Sunday.
- In addition to the two existing COVID hospitals, where 110 beds were filled, a third was opened at the Department of Physical Medicine. The capacity of that hospital is 35 beds.

# VRANJE

## CSO ACTIVITIES

- In just two days of action organized by the Center for Media Transparency and Social Responsibility, a large amount of material assistance was collected, as well as 130,000 dinars that will be used to purchase supplies listed as most necessary for patients treated who are infected with corona virus at the Vranje Health Center.
- Under the slogan "Our city, our people, our country", sanitary equipment, water, medical equipment and other things necessary for better functioning of COVID hospitals and COVID clinics, as well as for more dignified treatment of hospitalized patients were collected.

**JUNE 26 - JULY 3, 2020**



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