

## Students brought joy to ministries and diplomatic missions for the Roma New Year – Vasilitsa

Vice prime minister Mr. Tomislav Donchev, the Chair of the Parliament Mrs. Tsveta Karayancheva, the minister of labour and social policy Mr. Bisser Petkov, the minister of health Mr. Kiril Ananiev, vice ministers of education and science, of youth and sports, and of regional development, the ministry of foreign affairs, the ombudsman Mrs. Maya Manolova, the embassy of USA, UK, Denmark, Austria, Belgium, Spain, France, South Africa and India, as well as many other organizations and agencies welcomed on 15<sup>th</sup> of January Bulgarian and Roma students on the occasion of the holiday Vasilitsa, celebrated as the beginning of the new year from most of the Roma people in Bulgaria.

The events in Sofia and the province are part of national campaign of Center Amalipe for ninth year in a row. The purpose of the campaign is to celebrate and promote the holiday of Vasilitsa – Roma New Year. The campaign gives opportunities to students from all around the country to wish health and prosper with the traditions of Roma and Bulgarian folklore.

15<sup>th</sup> January, Monday

On 09:30



The festive day started with the students from *United School "Hristo Botev"*, *Kaspichan* and *Secondary School "Tsanko Tserkovsky"*, *Nikola Kozlevo*, who visited early in the morning **The European Commission Representation Office**, where the students performed traditional "survakane" for health and brought the good mood with their dances.

On 11:00

The vice minister of regional development and public works Mrs. Malina Kroumova greeted the students from *United School "P.R. Slaveykov"*, *Dzhulyunitsa*. The children told the legend of Bango Vasili and presented traditional folklore songs and dances. Mrs. Krumova and her team received wishes for health and luck with the tradition "survakane". The vice minister wished health, prosper and success in school and in life to the students and



their teachers. The children were surprised with gifts.

The students from *Primary School "Vasil Levski"*, visited for the second time the **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** to celebrate Vasilitsa – Roma New Year. Nine years ago, alongside with *Primary School "Kliment Ohridsky"*, *Tishevitsa*, they started this tradition, initiated by Center "Amalipe".



The students were kindly greeted by the **Minister of labour and social policy Mr. Bisser Petkov**, to whom they wished health and prosper and presented their traditions. From the traditional festive meal – new year's *banitza*, the minister got the wish ***"Wise decisions. The Wisdom of the mind is not measured by the knowledge, but with the ability to discover new truth."***

The seventhgraders from *Secondary School "St. Kliment Oridsky"*, *Simeonovgrad*. visited the **Ministry of Health**. With thematic poems and hand-made traditional "survachki", they wished health, luck and prosper to the health minister **Mr. Kiril Ananiev** and his team.



"Only through knowledge you can be successful citizens of our country. I wish you health, boldness and strength to gather new knowledge in school."- this was wished to the students from *Primary School "Yordan Yovkov"*, *Yambol* from the **Head of the political office of the minister of defense Mr. Iliya Nalbantov**. "Only through knowledge we can achieve the integration, we all want. And only knowing and purposeful, you can one day, if you are interested, join the Bulgarian army."- added he. He wished health and success to the children and their teachers. The students presented the tradition "survakane" for health and performed traditional songs and dances.



The meeting was also attended by vice chief of defense lieutenant general Plamen Atanasov and heads of departments.

**The Ministry of Education and Science** and Center for intercultural dialog and tolerance



“Amalipe” celebrated together for another year the holiday “Vasilitsa” and the beginning of the Roma New Year. Students from *United School “Hristo Botev”*, *Kaspichan* and *Secondary School “Tsanko Tserkovsky”*, *Nikola Kozlevo* danced, sang and shared the traditions of Bulgarian and Roma folklore, wishing health and prosper to all Bulgarians. The **Vice minister of education and science Mrs. Denitsa Sacheva** told to the children the

legend of Bango Vasil, who saved the Roma people from drowning. She wished to the students from all ages to follow the traditions, but to also look into the future. Denitsa Sacheva assured the children that the bridge between the traditions and the future is education and told them to go to school with curiosity.

**The Vice minister of Youth and Sport Mrs. Vanya Kotseva** welcomed the students from

*United School “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, Aprilovo*, who greeted her with colourful program for Vasilitsa. The minister had a long conversation with the children about their dreams, hobbies and favourite activities. She promised to visit them in the school so they can play sports together and also to take part in future school activities in the village of Aprilovo.



The children from *United School “St. Ivan Rilsky”, Cherventsi* greeted the employees of the **National Employment Agency**. Dressed in traditional Roma costumes, the children told the legend of Bango Vasil, what are the traditional ways of celebrating the holiday and the ways to prepare the festive table. After that they performed the tradition “survakane” on all of the present employees with beautiful hand-made “survachki”. The team of the Agency wished to the children success in school and to make their dreams come true. The Director of the Agency surprised the students from Cherventsi with gifts.

Students from *Primary School "Hristo Botev", Galabnik* visited the **National Agency for Social Assistance** for the holiday Vasilitsa. The children greeted the management with impressive folklore performance in the spirit of Bulgarian traditions and gifted their public with handmade gifts. **The deputy executive director of the Agency Mrs. Ana Ananieva and the director of the Agency of child protection Mr. Emil Todorov** greeted the children.



There was a lot of excitement, traditional songs and dances, wishes for health and prosper in the **Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities(CEICSEM)** with the visit of the children from the *Primary School, Golyamo novo selo* for the holiday of Bango Vasil.

**Fondation "America for Bulgaria"** greeted the students from *Primary School "N. Y. Vaptsarov", Selanovtsi*, who greeted their hosts for the

holiday and brought up smiles on their faces with songs and dances.

The students from *Primary school "Vasil Levski", Vidrare* participated in the celebrations of Vasilitsa –

The Roma New Year. The students were guests of the **Bulgarian-Swiss Chamber of Commerce.** There they were kindly





greeted and presented artistic program to their hosts. Mr. Boni Bonev – the Chairman of the Managing Board experienced the tradition “survakane” for health and success in the upcoming year. The artistic program of the students received well-deserved applause from the hosts.

We also visited the **Embassy of India** together with the students from the *Primary School "Hristo Botev, Stamboliiski*. Students gave performance with poems, songs and the colourful dance "Holly.". Her Excellency



Pudja Capur received wishes of health with the tradition “survakane. We have expressed our gratitude to the Embassy for the long-standing partnership with Center Amalipe and the positive response to our invitation to visit them, as well as the support to our calls for tolerance and friendship on the Roma Child Festival. We invited them to join the ambassadorial group on Roma integration. *Her Excellency Pudja Capur: "Thank you for being our guests, you brightened up our day. I hope we will see each other more often, because we are rarely visited by happy faces. "*

**On 11:30**



Twelve children from *Primary School "Otets Paisii ", Iskra*, visited the **Belgian Embassy** in Sofia, where the students received warm welcoming. Students sang and danced in the tradition of the celebration with many wishes for health, prosper, luck and peace.

In the office of **"Together in Class"** guests were the students from *the Primary Schools "St. St. Cyril and Methodius", Malorad*,

and "Otets Paisii", Borovan, together with their teachers. For Together in class' team the children from third and fifth grade performed a special program by recreating the legend of St.Vasil, with dances and good-wishing in the traditions of the Roma and Bulgarian folklore. With the tradition "survakane" for health and prosper they brought to the team positive energy for a festive beginning of the week. The students gifted their hosts hand-made paper dolls of the characters from the tale "Grandpa Turns Turnip". The message of the gift was connected with the mission of Together in Class - as the characters together pull the turnip, to continue the work on pulling out the "big turnip" of the educational system in Bulgaria.



**On 12:00**

**The Center for Educational Initiatives** welcomed in its office *Fourth Primary School "Georgi Sava Rakovski", Berkovitsa* and shared with them the "Vasilitsa" holiday. The children told the origin story of the holiday, showed the tradition "survakane" for health and sang wonderful songs. They gifted their hosts with the traditional hand-made by the students "survachka".



**The Danish Embassy in Sofia** celebrated Bango Vasil with *Primary School "Graf N. Ignatiev" from the village of Graf Ignatievo*. The children performed traditional songs and dances. They wished to Ambassador Soren Jakobsen and the staff of the Embassy happy new





year and good luck with the tradition “survakane”. The ambassador talked to the kids about the importance of education and going to school.

There was a visit from Students from the *Primary School "Georgi Stoykov Rakovski", Golyamo Novo selo* in the **Commission for Protection**

**Discrimination!** With dances, songs, traditional “survakari” wishes, hand fortune telling and gifts for a good year, the children brightened the weekday. The Commission was highly impressed and gifted the children with presents and invited them again.

The students from *Borovan - Primary School "Otets Paisii"* visited our long-term partners – **Trust for social achievement.** TSA employees wished to Borovan's students to have good grades in school, to be persistent in learning, not to give up and to get a higher education and one day to have a good realization. The children wished to the TSA team health and success in the new year.



The Amalipe Center initiative was joined by a group from *Secondary school "Vasil Levski", Yablanitsa:* Svetoslav Stefanov, Veronica Marinova, Lethissia Lazarova, Yolita Stefanova, Mariela Markova and Monika Maneva. They had the opportunity to visit **The French Embassy.** H.E. Eric Lubedel - Ambassador of France and his wife, Mrs. Brigitte Valla-Lubedel welcomed the group. The





talented children presented their program in which recreated the story of the holiday, combining traditions of Bulgarian and Roma folklore. On behalf of the students and the pedagogical team of *Secodary School "V. Levski"* the hosts received handmade souvenirs, the special New Year's edition of the school newspaper, the famous delight and halva from Yablanitsa. And while they were eating French Christmas sweets, the children shared about their successes in the learning process, about their dreams, about the traditions of their community, answering the questions of H. E. Lubedel. Mrs. Danova, who accompanied the group, thanked the French ambassador for its active support and engagement with the problems of the Roma community in Bulgaria.

We celebrated the Roma New Year with the students from *Secondary School "Otets Paisii" Medkovets*, who visited **the South African Embassy**. We were very warmly welcomed.



Students had prepared their own performance with legends about Vasilitsa, poems, songs and dances with their own choreography.

Ambassador Mr. Mamabolu was delighted by the performances of kids. We thanked each other for the long standing partnership and support.

Students wished health with the tradition "survakane", with hand-made by them "survaknitsi", which they gifted the

ambassador with. The students brought traditional home baked bread with hidden wishes inside. The children were rewarded with treats and a lot of smiles. The ambassador stated that the Embassy of South Africa they were due to join the Ambassadorial Group on Roma Integration.

### On 12:30

For the first time this year the **Embassy of Spain** opened its doors on Vasilitsa. The students from the group "Folklore of the ethnicities – Roma folklore" from *Primary*





*School "Vasil Levski", Karadzovo, led by Maya Zdravkova, were warmly welcomed by **Cesar Aja Marino, an educational adviser at The Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain.** After recreating the legend of BangoVassil, the students showed traditional dance "horos", which Mr. Marino joined with a smile. The students wished health with the tradition "survakane" and brought traditional meal- "*banitsa*" with lucks. The *banitsa* was prepared especially from the company responsible for the healthy breakfast of the students in the school. The children and the teachers have written the wishes themselves. The wish, which Mr. Cesar Aja Marino drew from the New Year's *banitsa* was "Health. The healthy person is truly rich. ". The students gifted the Embassy the "Tree of Fertility" - hand-made by the students in the classes of the group "Colourful magic ", led by Natalia Kuscenko The representative of Amalipe, Desislava Stefanova gave a Roma flag to Mr. Marino, shared the experience of the organization in prevention of Roma students leaving school and invited the Embassy to join the Roma Integration Group, started two years ago from Center Amalipe and the former ambassador of Norway in Bulgaria – H.E.Ms. Guro Katarina Vikor.*

**On 01:00**



The children from *Primary School "St. St. Cyril and Methodius ", Malorad, visited in **The Headquarters of the Syndicate of Bulgarian Teachers in Sofia.** The talented students recreated Roma traditions and folklore. They wished health and luck with the tradition of "survakane" to **the Chair of the Syndicate Yanka Takeva** and her team. According to the tradition, the students-"survakari" received gifts from the Syndicate hosts. Mrs. Takeva thanked the students for the greeting and wished them success in school on the road of knowledge, to be healthy and happy – a pride for their parents and teachers. The school principal Maya Donkova and teachers shared about their work with Roma children, policies to keep them in school, and to increase their success and aspirations to continue learning and developing. They thanked for the hospitality and gifted the Chair Yanka Takeva with specially made by the students art piece.*

*Students from **Primary School "Dimcho Debelyanov", Ihtiman, made their best wishes to the Director of the Hungarian Cultural Institute Mrs. György Dimitrov.***

*Professional High School of Textile and Leather Products, Sofia*, visited the **Foundation Open Society Institute** - Sofia, where the students greeted for the holiday with songs and wishes the Executive Director Mr. Georgi Stoychev and the other hosts from the foundation.

Students from *Secondary School "Hristo Smirnenki" from Koynare* presented the interesting festive program for Vasilitsa and gifted their beautiful "survachki" to the **ambassador of Austria in Sofia – H.E. Roland Hauser**. The students wished to him and the rest of his team health and prosper in the new year with the tradition "survakane".

**The Chair of the National Agency of Child Protection, Mrs. Ophelia Kaneva**, was greeted for Vasilitsa from the children of *Primary School "St.St. Cyril and Methodius"*, Cheshnegirovo. The festive mood overtook the institution's employees and at the end of the visit the conversations were friendly, and students promised they will have good grades in school and will actively participate in the school life.

As part of the Center Amalipe's initiative, the fascinating students-"survakari" from *United School "P. R. Slaveykov", Dzhulyunitsa* visited the **Executive Agency of the Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth** on the occasion of the annual performance of the tradition "survakane" for Vasilitsa – the Roma New Year! **The Executive Director of the "Programming, Monitoring and Evaluation" Department Stanimira Kaloyanova**, joined by the entire team of the Department, met with their guests, who wished health and prosper with traditional "survakane"!

### On 13:30

**The Ministry of Foreign Affairs** was visited by students from *Primary school "Georgi Stoykov Rakovski", Gulyantsi*, who are working on the project "Every student will be excellent!". The Survacars made good wishes and blessings for the new year for everybody, working in the Ministry. They told some of the legends about Bango Vasil and explained the origin of the holiday celebrations. The team of the Ministry wanted to turn this visit into a tradition and said that they will be looking forward for the next meeting!

*The students from Yablanitsa* were welcomed by the team

of **Mrs. Maya Manolova - Ombudsman of Republic of Bulgaria**. Their performance included a refrain from "Vasilitsa"

and a dance that symbolizes the tolerance between ethnicities. "Be happy and healthy!" blessed Slavi, who had personally made his traditional "survaknitsa".

Mrs. Manolova gifted all of the participants with presents and thanked them for the visit. "... Alongside with the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2018 has a special place in our school calendar, as we are celebrating triple anniversary - 160 years of secular education, 110







years of junior high school and 80 years of high school, " – explained the children. They invited Mrs. Manolova on their celebration on 24 May 2018. The Ombudsman assured them that she will participate in the celebrations and wished them health and success in their education. The visit in the institution

ended with treats and informal conversation with Mrs. Eva Zhecheva and Mrs. Nurten Patrakli.

**The Bulgarian Center for Not – for- Profit law and the Director Nadya Shabani** were also visited for the holiday. *Students from Professional School "Todor Peev" Etropole* greeted Mrs. Shabani and her team, who had taken care to make the children feel special and welcomed.



Despite the long distance and the long journey the students from *Primary School "Tsanko Tserkovsky", Sredishte* arrived in Sofia too and visited **the British Ambassador .H.E. Mrs. Emma Kate Hopkins**, and shared with her the traditional for their village "survakane".

**On 14:00**



*Primary School "N.Y. Vaptsarov", Selanovtsi* visited the **Council of Ministers** where they were greeted by the **Deputy Prime Minister Tomislav Donchev**. Once they greeted him with their program, he

had a conversation with the kids – about what they love to do, what their dreams are.

*The children from Aprilovo visited the National Network for the Children. There they were kindly welcomed by the Director of the Network Mr. Georgi Bogdanov, who explained to them what the organization does and how it helps children from every part of Bulgaria. The students blessed with luck with the tradition “survakane” and promised to come back the next year.*



**16<sup>th</sup> January , Tuesday**

**The Chair of the Parliament Mrs. Tsveta Karayancheva** welcomed the young students from *Primary School "St. St. Cyril and Methodius", Razhdavitsa.* The children got a chance to visit the cabinets of various parliamentary groups and visited the plenary hall, where the laws are made. The students shared their dreams with Mrs. Karayancheva. They got a chance to ring the parliamentary bell and wished to the members of the parliament and the ministers to make only wise decisions.



*Center “Amalipe” wants to thank to all of the schools that took part in the celebration of Vasilitza and to all of the institutions and agencies that welcomed the children and shared the holiday with such joy.*

***Bahtalo o Vasili! Bahtalo Nevo Bresh!!***