

## Children from different ethnicities visited together ministries and embassies to celebrate the Roma New Year – Vasilitsa

The Chair of the Parliament Mrs. Tsveta Karayancheva, the Deputy Prime Ministers Mr. Tomislav Donchev and Mrs. Ekaterina Zaharieva, the Minister of Labour and Social policies Mr. Bisser Petkov, the Minister of Health Mr. Kiril Ananiev, the Deputy-Ministers of Education and Science, the Ombudsman Maya Manolova, the ambassadors of Great Britain, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, Switzerland and many other institutions and organizations welcomed on 14<sup>th</sup> of January children from different ethnicities from more than 30 schools from all around the country, to celebrate together Vasilitsa, the beginning of the new year for most of the Roma in Bulgaria. This year Center Amalipe refused to send children to the Minister of defense after his discriminatory statement about the whole Roma community.

*The tenth anniversary of the initiative in Sofia is part of the national campaign, organized by Center “Amalipe”, the community centers and schools from all around the country, with the purpose to celebrate and popularize the holiday Vasilitsa . The campaign gives an opportunity to survakari from the schools in the country to wish health and prosper with the traditions of Roma and Bulgarian folklore. The schools, participating in the initiative are part of the School Network of Center “Amalipe” “Every student will be a winner”, that includes 270 schools from the country.*

### **14<sup>th</sup> of January, Monday**

#### **At 10:00 am**

The festive Monday started with the students from United school “Hristo Botev”, Kaspichan and Secondary school “Tsanko Tserkovsky”, Nikola Kozlevo, Shumen Region, who presented dance and best wishes for the new year in the **World Bank** and provoked the sincere smiles of the team of **Mr. Fabricio Dzarkone**.

#### **At 11:00 am**

**The Ambassador of Switzerland Mrs. Muriel Berse Koen** greeted the children from primary School “G.S. Rakovsky”, Golyamo novo village, Targovishte Region and the children performed the tradition *survakane* for health and prosper. The pleasant meeting took place in the office of the **Bulgarian-Swiss chamber of commerce** after the invitation of the Board Chairman **Mr. Boni Bonev**, who also received best wishes for the New Year after the little ones performed the tradition *survakane*.





The students from Primary School "Ivan Vazov" and Secondary School "St. Kliment Ohridsky", Simeonovgrad, Haskovo Region, presented the legend for Bango Vassil in front of the **Head of Centre for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities (CEICSEM)** Mrs. Manuela Radeva and the **Director of "Policies for strategic development"** of the Ministry of Education and Science.

On 14<sup>th</sup> of January to celebrate the holiday Vasilitza the students from United School

"St. St. Cyril and Methodius", Tarnene visited **the State agency for child protection**. The **Chair of the Agency dr. Eleonora Lilova** and the staff members witnessed an interesting amalgam of Christian and typical Roma traditiols and rituals. With smiles on their face the children greeted their hosts with songs and traditional dances. In the end of the performance they did the tradition *survakane*. There was a meeting of dr. Lilova and the principal of the school Mrs. Polya Blazheva, Mrs. Mariya Lozanova – teacher of Bulgarian language and literature and the assistant in Center "Amalipe" Mr. Tashko Kirilov and important for the society and education topics were discussed.



The students from United School "P.R. slaveykov", Dzuluinitza performed the tradition *survakane* for health, luck and prosper for the staff members of **Foundation "America for Bulgaria"**. The children shared that they celebrate in different ways, but they live together and that doesn't separate them but bring them closer. Because the diversity is wealth! They are united by the wish for better life, health, happiness and more – friendship! **Nancy Shiller – President of Foundation "America**



**for Bulgaria” and Dessislava Talyokova – Executive Director** thanked the children for the exciting program. Neli Nikolova – educational coordinator in Center “Amalipe” emphasized that “we should not forget that the prototype of “Every student will be a winner” started with financing from Foundation “America for Bulgaria” and we are thankful for that. The School network and Amalipe have success not only in keeping the children in school but also in modernizing the education, implementing innovations and increasing the quality. It is not a coincidence that one of the three networks, that stand out as innovative, is the “Every student will be a winner”.



**The Minister of Labour and Social policies Bisser Petkov** and his team met with students from Primary School “St.St. Cyril and Methodius”, Straldzha to celebrate the Roma New Year. The children greeted the hosts with a dance, songs and traditional wishes for health and luck. They presented with *banitza* with fortunes inside and wished to minister Petkov and to the deputy **ministers Zornitsa Rusinova, Sultanka Petrova and Lasar Lasarov** a happy new year. Minister Petkov greeted the children

and wished to them to be healthy, to study more, to be better in school, to get knowledge and new skills and to have a happy childhood. The Minister greeted their teachers too and thanked them for their mission to educate the children in protecting the ethnical and cultural tradition, as well as modernizing the Roma community. The Chair of “Amalipe” Mr. **Deyan Kolev** thanked the ministry of Labour and Social policies for the effort they put in the inclusion of vulnerable groups and emphasized on the need of increasing the number of Roma labour mediators.

The students from Primary School “Graf Ignatiev”, Graf Ignatievo and Primary School “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, Tchesnegirovo, Povdiv Region performed the tradition *survakane*



infront of the **Deputy Minister of education and science Mrs. Denitsa Sacheva**. The children greeted the employees of the Ministry with traditional for the Roma new year songs and the little Tsvetomira performed and Indian dance. The children wished health upon their hosts with the tradition *survakane* and presented *banitsa* with fortunes inside. Mrs. Sacheva encourage the children to attend regularly school, because this is the only way to achieve their dreams. The students had a tour around the building f the ministry and the employees gifted them with presets and books.



*Survakari* from Secondary School “Hristo Botev”, Gabare, Vratsa region greeted with traditional wishes **the Ambassador of Ireland Mr. Michael Forbs**. The students had prepared and traditional Roma dishes, served at the festive table, they told their hosts about the local tradition and presented the tradition *survakane*!

For the first time in the traditional *survakane* attended the students from Primary School “Bacho Kiro”, Byala Cherkva, Veliko Tarnovo Region. They visited and greeted **the**

**Ambassador of Kingdom of Denmark Mr. Soren Yakobsen**. The children left with gifts and a lot of smiles.

The students from Primary School “Enyo Markovsky”, Shumen and United School “St. Ivan Rilsky”, Cherventsi, Varna Region wished health and success to the staff members of the **Ministry of Health, as well to the chief health inspector Mr. Angel Kunchev. Minister Ananiev** thanked the organizers from Center for interethnic dialog and tolerance “Amalipe” and expressed his hope that in the future the organization will continue to work in partnership with the state institutions on the path for equal integration of the Roma children.



The participants from Primary School “N. Y. Vaptsarov”, Selanovtsi, Vratsa Region presented the play “Why there is one bread” to the executive director of the **Center for educational initiatives Mr. Tsvetan**





**Tsvetansky** and his team. The public from the Center shared that they were left happy and with smiles after the visit of the children, who traveled more than 200 km. The public thanked to the teachers and the principal Mrs. Petya Rusinova.

The students from Primary School “Geo Milev”, Belozem, Plovdiv Region visited the **Head of the Syndicate “Education” in KT “Podkrepa” Mrs. Yulian Petrov**. The children wished health and prosper to everybody with the tradition *survakane* and their Indian dance impressed the employees.

**Open Society Institute** welcomed the students from Primary School “Hristo Botev”, Glava village, Pleven Region who greeted their hosts with the holiday and at 13:00 the *survakari* visited the **Hungarian Culture Institute**.

**Unicef Bulgaria** was host to the students of Secondary School “Nofit Rilsky”, Tvarditsa, Sliven region and to 113<sup>th</sup> Secondary School “Sava Filaretov”, Sofia. The two schools



participated for the first time in the celebration of the holiday on Sofia, but their performance was great. The hosts were left filled with positive energy from the wishes of the children and invited them to visit again next year.

The children from Primary School “St. Kliment Ohridsky” from the Tishevitsa village visited the office of **the National network for the children** and performed the tradition *survakane* in front of the team wishing them health and prosper for the new year. The students presented the story for the origin of the tradition, sang few wonderful songs and did the *survakane* tradition with different wishes for health and prosper.



The students from Primary School “ Hristo Botev”, Banitsa village, wished health with the tradition *survakane* to the management of **the Agency for social benefits**. They were welcomed with excitement and presents by the deputy executive director of the Agency Mrs. Anna Ananieva. The children brought smiles to their hosts as they presented special program for the holiday that included songs, dances and wishes in Bulgarian and Roma language. The hosts wished the children health, prosper and to study hard so they can become successful young people with great future.

The students from Primary School “Vasil Levsky”, Vidrare village, Pratets Municipality were guests of the Bulgarian

Parliament by invitation of the member of parliament **Borislav Borisov** from Political Party GERB, who is a member of the Commission for education and science and the Commission for Health in the 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria. The young visitors greeted the Member of Parliament for the holiday. They learned more about the work and the history of the Parliament and visited the Plenary hall.



Primary School “Vasil Levsky”, Karadzhovo

visited the embassy of **Republic of India**. According to the main hypothesis of the historians, the country of origin of the Roma was located in North-west India in the Punjab region. There were elements from the Indian dance folklore that reminded for the origin of Roma, included in the dance, titled “The good



man”, dedicated to Mahatma Ghandi – one of the most influential people of XX century, with which the children greeted the public. The dance was performed on the sound of the prayer-song from XV century in the language gudzeraty, in which Bulgarian and indian folklore motives were mixed and performed by the Bulgarian singer

Diana Dafova. The stained glass, made by Rositsa Dimitrova from 6<sup>th</sup> grade from the “Colourful magic” club, titled “The good angel” was the gift that the visitors prepared for the embassy of the Republic of India.



At 11:30



United School “Neofit Rilski”, Samokov visited the **Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law**. The children wished health with the tradition *survakane* and greeted their hosts with colourful music performance.

*Kukeri-survakari* from Primary School “Hristo Botev”, Batanovtsi, Pernik Region greeted **Mr. Radosvet Radev – the Chairman of the Bulgarian chamber**

**of commerce** and his team.

Primary School “Hristo Botev”, Stamboliyskiy visited the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**. The children and their teachers invited their hosts in the atmosphere of the holiday Bango Vasil. In front of the public they presented the play “The Legend of the Roma”, performance on drums, Roma dance and traditional Bulgarian dance *horo* from the region of Pirin. The **Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Yurii Shterk**, who welcomed the children in the Ministry greeted them for the new year. “It is a good sign that this year the Roma New Year starts just a day after a Bulgarian city became the new European capital of Culture.” – said he and reminded that the core of this is to present the diversity of the European cultures. “And the Roma community is a part of the diversity and the tradition not only on the Balkans, but in whole Europe.”- added he and wished health, but also success in school to the children” as this is the way up.”



At 12:00

**Dr. Yanka Takeva**, head of the **Syndicate of the Bulgarian teachers at KNSB**, celebrated the Roma New Year with the children and pedagogues from the Professional High school for textile and



leather products and the 75<sup>th</sup> Primary School “Todor Kableshkov”, Sofia.

At 12:30



Students from the 5<sup>th</sup> Secondary School “P.R.Slaveykov”, Pernik visited the **embassy of France** and presented the tradition *survakane* to the **ambassador Eric Lebedel** and Mrs. Lebedel. The students gifted their hosts with hand-made traditional *survachki* and a mask; and the ambassador gave them presents and told them about his work and for France.

Representatives of Primary School “ Vasil Levsky”, Karadzhovo entered for the first time the building of the **Council of Ministers** to celebrate Vasilitsa. They were warmly greeted by the **Deputy Prime Minister Tomislav Donchev** to whom the children wished health and prosper and presented their traditions. From the new-years *banitsa* the minister got the wish “Countless successes. Don’t follow the way – walk where there is no path and create a trace”. The students had the chance to walk around the building of the Council of Ministers, built in 1956 and part of the monumental architectural center of Sofia.



At 13:00

The students from United School “ Hristo Botev”, Banitsa village, Vratsa Region visited **Foundation “Together in class”**, where were greeted kindly and provoked smiles on the faces of their hosts.





On the occasion of the Roma new year- Vasilitsa, **Foundation “Fridriech Ebert”** was visited by the students from United School “ St. Kliment Ohridsky”, Tisevitsa, Vratsa Region. The children performed some of the rituals dedicated to predictions and wishing “healthy” new year. The team thanked them for the wishes, the smiles, the effort and the positive atmosphere.

The students from United School “Neofit Rilsky”, Samokov visited the **embassy of Belgium** in Sofia on the occasion of Bango Vasil – The Roma new year! They presented to ambassador Francois Bontan and his team traditional Roma dishes, rituals, songs and poems!

*Survakari* from Primary School “Nikola Vaptsarov”, Selanovtsi, Vratsa Region greeted the **ombudsman Maya Manolova** on the occasion of the Roma New Year – Vasilitsa. The students showed the tradition of the holiday using the Bulgarian and Roma folklore. “We wish you as much happiness and wealth as much land there is in our village, which is the largest in Bulgaria” wished



the principal of the school Mrs. Petya Rusinova and explained that in their school in understanding and tolerance study 153 children – 50 % Roma and 50 % Bulgarians.

*Survakari* from Secondary School “Hristo Smirnensky”, Gulyantsi visited the office of the **Trust for social alternatives**. They wished health and prosper, performed the tradition *survakane* and sang songs. The team of TSA welcomed them warmly and wished to them to be successful students and presented them with gifts.



The executive director of the **Employment Agency Mr. Dragomir Nikolov** and his team welcomed a group of children on the occasion of Vasilitsa – the Roma new year. For a second year in a row the students from United School “St. Ivan Rilsky”, Cherventsi, varna Region, were guests to the Agency and presented a festive program. They talked about the traditions for Vasilitsa, the symbols of festive dinner table and wished health and prosper with the tradition *survakane*. The management of the

Employment Agency gifted the children with sweets and wished them not only health, but also many smiles and success in school. After the legend for Bango Vasil and the performance of the tradition *survakane*, the head of the Agency – Mr. Dragomir Nikolov walked them to the **Main Labour Inspectorate** where the children surprised the **Executive director – Romyana Mihaylova** and her team during a meeting.

The embassy of Great Britain was visited by the students from United School “P.R.Slaveykov”, Dzhulyunitsa and Primary School “Bacho Kiro”, Byala Chekva. **H.E. Mrs. Ema Kate Hopkins** and her team were impressed by the incredible atmosphere, that the children created with their performances of traditional songs and dances and wishes for health and prosper. They also brought *banitsa* with fortunes inside. With a little shyness and smiles the children talked with her Excellency in English and they talked about their dreams and hopes. Mrs. Nikolova, who accompanied the group, thanked the ambassador of Great Britain for the active support and engagement with the problems of the roma community in Bulgaria.



Traditional clothes, theater and dances: the 7<sup>th</sup>-graders from Primary School “Otets Paisiy”, Medkovets village, Montana region visited the **embassy of Federal Republic of Germany**. The students greeted and wished for a happy Bango Vasil.





Secondary School “Hristo Smirnensky”, Koynare, Pleven Region visited the **Representation of the European commission in Bulgaria** and greeted with the tradition *survakane* **Mr. Ognyan Zlatev**, who welcomed the students very kindly. The children greeted him with songs and wishes and he gifted them educational materials for the state members of the European Union and wished

to them to be able to visit them all, to be healthy and to be successful in school.

On the occasion of Vasilitsa – The Roma New Year the team of **Executive Agency “Operational programme Science and education for smart growth”** welcomed the students from Secondary School “Vasil Levsky”, Yablanitsa, who performed folklore program. In the program was included a dance “Ethno palette” that combines Roma and Bulgarian folklore melodies, that shows the successful

combining / integration/ of the two culture communities, representing tradition and current times. Part of this was the tradition *survakane* for health and prosper. And in the end of the celebration everybody took part in the traditional dance *horo* .



After the talented students from the school in Yablanitsa teach the members of the Agency how to dance the so called “roma” horo, they greeted the editors of Az Buki. Everybody expected the excited

*survakari* and the greeting they have prepared for their hosts. The editors wished them future successes and to follow their dreams!

**At 14:00**

The students from Primary School “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, Cheshnigirovo, Plovdiv region had the exciting opportunity to visit the **embassy of Austria** in Sofia as part of the tradition on Center “Amalipe” to greet different institutions on the occasion of the Roma New year – 14<sup>th</sup> of January. The children were special guests of the ambassador of Austria in Bulgaria **Mrs. Andrea Wicke**.

**15<sup>th</sup> of January, Tuesday**

And in Tuesday the **Chair of the Parliament Mrs. Tsveta Karayacheva** welcomed *survakari* from the Professional high school of textile and leather products and the 75<sup>th</sup> Primary School “Todor Kableskov”, Sofia. The children performed the tradition *survakane* for health and after that had a chance to walk around the place where the Bulgarian laws are created.



**Center “Amalipe” is grateful to all of the schools that participated in the celebration of Vasilotsa and to all of the institutions that welcomed the children and so kindly shared their holiday.**

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