



CENTAR ZA GRAĐANSKO OBRAZOVANJE
CENTRE FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

Podgorica, 10 September 2008

THE PRICE OF LANGUAGE OR FIRST THINGS FIRST

Centre for Civic Education (CCE) urges the authorities to cease this protracted simulation of reform processes and begin to observe the principles and procedures of democracy, thus contributing to genuine democratisation of the Montenegrin society.

On the 5 September 2008 the Administrative Committee of the Testing Centre of Montenegro adopted *Regulations on the mode and procedures of testing the knowledge of Montenegrin language for the applicants who wish to acquire Montenegrin citizenship* as well as *Programme and criteria for establishing the basic level of knowledge of Montenegrin language for applicants who wish to acquire Montenegrin citizenship*. Having analysed carefully both of these documents, we have failed to understand the knowledge of which language and according to which orthographic rules was required of the candidates attending the first exam on the 8 September 2008.

If the language is Montenegrin (as no other language is mentioned, except for one note of the “mother tongue” – Article 6 of the Regulations, regarding the composition of the exam committee whose “at least two members must be professors of the mother tongue and literature”), the question is – **which criteria, or rather which grammar and orthography apply at this exam**, since we know that the process of standardising Montenegrin language is still unfinished. Which rules are used to teach Montenegrin language in primary and secondary schools? What is the basis for the founding of the Department for Montenegrin Language and South-Slavic Literature?

If the language is a mother tongue, that is – Bosnian, Montenegrin, Croatia or Serbian, which are taught in primary and secondary schools, the situation is even more paradoxical. Namely, the only “mother tongue” mentioned in the above two documents is the one which lacks established rules of grammar and orthography, i.e. **has no standardised criteria that could be used to test somebody’s knowledge of the language, the minimum level of which ought to be established by this, by the way, impudently expensive exam.**

The general confusion and media uproar caused by this incident, as well as by the succession of events at the Department of Philosophy in Nikšić since May 2008, are another painful reminder of the systemic failure of our state and our society as a whole – **the superficial, formalistic approach to legal regulation of our reality and the irony of the gap between the everyday reality and its legal**



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representation. Starting with the highest legal act of this country, its Constitution, through the laws and decisions, all the way to the subject matters in schools, University Departments, regulations and programmes – they all operate **formally** in an unfortunately non-existing language – the Montenegrin language. **This is not a question of whether Montenegrin language exists or not *as such*, nor whether there should be a special department for the study of it – the question is whether there is a clear sequence of acts and procedures that ought to be observed** in order to make the discussion on the Montenegrin, or any other language, meaningful. The sequence, we firmly believe, has **standardisation of the language and the creation of a grammar and orthography as the highest priority**, not the adoption of a *Decision to create an expert institution to establish the criteria and procedure for testing the knowledge of Montenegrin language for applicants wishing to acquire Montenegrin citizenship* and its accompanying *Regulations and Programmes* noted above. We are once again witnessing the cynicism of the ruling apparatus, which continues to devour the remnants of all meaning and hope that with independence we also gained a chance to really build a better, more just society, founded upon democratic principles, procedures and institutions and not on their sneering paper replicas.

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