

***Branko Cvetkovic* Faces Mobility Impediments**

Background

The Belgrade based cultural association *Branko Cvetkovic* has an internationally renowned folklore ensemble, with a long history of performing at folklore and ethno festivals around the world and has received many artistic awards. The ensemble was recently invited to take part in the International Folklore Festival in Minturno (Italy) being held from the 11th-21st July 2008 but was not able to participate in the Festival due to visa problems.

How it works

Citizens of Serbia need to obtain a visa before traveling to Italy, or any EU country for that matter.

The organizers of the International Folklore Festival in Minturno guaranteed that the travel and accommodation costs for the Ensemble's members from Belgrade would be totally covered. They sent the required documentation to *Branko Cvetkovic*, along with the official invitation letter without which the Ensemble's members could not obtain a visa from the Italian Embassy. The Italian Embassy refused to accept the Ensemble's visa application / documentation.

Results

The decision of the Italian Embassy in Belgrade and general EU visa regulations prevented the participation of the *Branko Cvetkovic* ensemble in an international festival to which they were invited.

The consequences of this mobility obstacle are:

- intercultural dialogue and cooperation break down e.g. the audience of the International Festival in Minuturno did not have the opportunity to learn about Serbian folklore culture and heritage
- the members of the Ensemble are deprived of the possibility of engaging in bilateral or multilateral exchanges and networking with their international colleagues
- the members of the Ensemble have been blocked from engaging in artistic exchanges or co-productions with their colleagues during and (potentially) after the Festival

This case illustrates the mobility impediments experienced by Serbian artists and cultural professionals when seeking to travel and work abroad. It also has wider political implications by creating – with the help of the media - a negative image of the EU in Serbia.

Source

Daily Newspaper PRAVDA of the 10.07.2008. Merola ne da vizu za Rim (Merola not given visa for Rome). Available under: <http://www.pravda.co.yu/srbija/1176/merola-ne-da-vizu-za-rim>

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