

THE NEW OSCE REPRESENTATIVE IN CROATIA OPTED FOR VOJNIC AS HIS FIRST OFFICIAL TRIP

**Jorge Fuentes: You will be in the EU
once you resolve returnee issues**

If they have the ability to fulfil that task within a year and at the speed we propose, the OSCE Mission will leave Croatia, and your country will be ready to join the European Union, added Fuentes

By Maja Luketic

VOJNIC – The OSCE representative in Croatia, Jorge Fuentes Monzonís-Vilallonga, opted to visit the Karlovac County and Vojnic as his first official trip after assuming the office in Zagreb.

He visited a four-member family of Dusan Eremic who have been living in a shack for the last six years, while at the same time, the family of a Bosnian Croat, Mijadjikovic, resides in their family house. Although the Republic of Croatia provided Mijadjikovic with another residential house in Vojnic and allocated him building material, this family does not have the money to pay for the finalization of construction and interior arrangement of the house. Additional 80 families in Karlovac County face these and similar returnee issues, for which an effective solution can be found, rather fast, according to the OSCE.

- I just arrived to the country and it is my intention to visit all our field offices. I opted for Karlovac as my first visit since here they have clear examples of issues that returnees are facing. The Eremic family passes by their wonderful house on a daily basis while forced to live in this shack. That is torture and everything they went through, and are still going through, is an example of how horrible the war is, said OSCE Ambassador Jorge Fuentes.

He also visited the uncompleted house which the Mijadjikovic family should move into and said that its construction should be paid for by the Government.

- But we are not Serbs, we are Bosnian Croats and nobody cares about us, Mijadjikovic told him, adding that he would vacate the house of Eremic tomorrow if he had a place where he, his wife, and two underage children could live.

House and material

Although it appears that he was allocated a house and building material for finishing its construction, representatives of the OSCE could witness best that it is not possible for

him to replace the roof of the house by himself or to install windows and doors. Not because he would not want to do it but because he is not familiar with that work nor has the money to pay someone for the works.

Head of Field Office in Karlovac Jan Repa warned the Ambassador that even people who are very much of age, who cannot perform construction works even if they wanted to, are also faced with such apparently illogical situations.

It is precisely because of those issues that the OSCE Ambassador met with Prime Minister Ivo Sanader prior to his visit to Karlovac, who reaffirmed the willingness in resolving such basic life-related issues. As he mentioned, he would test the Prime Minister's good will already within a month when he presents him with a Road Map for the resolution of returnee issues, which would be drafted by members of all OSCE offices in Croatia, based on information from the field.

- I would have liked this to be earlier, but this Road Map will provide them with a clear picture of what we would like the Government to do for those people within a month, three months, six months or even longer. If they have the ability to do that work within a year at the speed we propose, the OSCE Mission will leave Croatia and your country will be ready to join the European Union, added Fuentes.

During his visit to Karlovac County, the high representative of the OSCE also visited the returnee family of Mirko Lisic in Krnjak, which to date has not acquired the right to reconstruction due to poor assessment of the commission for war damages, as well as the family of Dusan Vukobratovic whose house was left in excellent condition by the temporary occupant.