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**MUNICIPALITY OF BLAGOEVGRAD**

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**„BALKAN GAMES” in Blagoevgrad  
by project „BORDERLESS CULTURE“**

During the period of 4th and 5th of May 2019., the international folk festival „Balkan games” gathered hundreds of inhabitants and guests at the "Macedonia" square in the city of Blagoevgrad. In those days, an attractive procession of traditional bulgarian costumes announced the start of the Balkan games at the central streets of the city with parade of dance, vocal and Kukeri's groups from Bulgaria and Greece.

The Festival days gave us the opportunity to touch up with the authentic folklore of Bulgaria and Greece, presented by Bulgarian and Greek dancing ensembles and formations. The Festival's program, which was full of activities, contained educational and entertainment games for young and old balkanians, parades, festival performances, combined with curious craft demonstrations and exciting games and entertainment for every age, showing the ethno-cultural rhythm of the Balkans. At the Regional Historic Museum - Blagoevgrad, a workshop was held "In the museum with the slippers" for exchange of experience and good practices on new museum management models and Georgi Tenev's book "Balkan ritual" - publishing house "Kolibri", was presented. An interactive workshop on wheels presented films in virtual reality - part of the initiative "Immersion in culture at 360 degrees" for the promotion of the cultural - historical heritage of Bulgaria.

The festival was officially opened by Ms. Zornitsa Kraveva - Deputy Mayor of the European projects and Programmes of Blagoevgrad Municipality.

"I congratulate you on behalf of the Mayor of Blagoevgrad Municipality – dr. Atanas Kambitov, on my behalf and on behalf of the whole team, which organised this great event. This is one of the projects, that Municipality of Blagoevgrad implements with partners of neighboring Greece and it is a result of long-term partnership and it is one of the many projects implemented in different sectors of the cross-borders importance. It is a result of the targeted cooperation in the field of culture and tourism. The project is a bridge between generations, the communities and the cultures of the two countries, part of the big European family and contributes to maintain the good neighborly relations between the two countries. I believe, that the Festival "Balkan games" will give the opportunity to everyone to touch and to find new facts - common and different about the culture of the two countries. I am sure, you will find many new friends and friendships, which will continue in the future. I wish to all of you, interesting and unforgettable experiences and happy moments together, which will make the guests of the city of Blagoevgrad to come back again and again in our wonderful city", Zornitsa Kraveva, said.

The official guests of the Festival from the Greek partners were Mr. Anastasios Zafiridis – Representative of the Ministry of the Interior affairs of the Republic of Greece and Mr. George Arapakis – Director of the Center for Lifelong Learning in the Region of Central Macedonia, Greece. They thanked the Municipality of Blagoevgrad for the warm hospitality and for the good partnership. "The interest in the Festival is

great. Culture unites us, tourism unites us and I think, that through that project we will take advantage of these opportunities”, Mr Zafiridis said.

In Balkan games took part:

- Center for Personal and Creative Development of the Children of Blagoevgrad with the performances of the Children's folklore ensemble "Pirinche" and Children's folklore ensemble "Pirinska kitka", Bulgaria
- Community center "Nikola Vaptsarov– 1866" with the performances of community's folklore group, folklore ensemble "Dzhumaycheta", group for Old urban songs "Nezhni zvutsi", Bulgaria
- Kukeri group from the third quarter
- The Cultural Association "Nei Epivates"
- The Cultural Assosiation "Anagennisii"

In the autumn of 2019, in the framework of the " BORDERLESS CULTURE " project , the second part of the Balkan Games will be held in the city of Blagoevgrad, focused on children's creativity .

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