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**Janja Juzbašić, M.S.**

*Stjepan Gruber* Regional Museum

Županja

zavicajni.muzej.stjepan.gruber@vu.t-com.hr

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## The Županja Museum and the 2014 floods

- Since its foundation the Museum has been housed in a building of monument character – a Military Frontier *čardak* (blockhouse), a closed guard-house with a porch, the only preserved example of defensive Military Frontier architecture in Croatia. The Museum was founded in 1953 and it is for the time being the only complex type museum institution in region known since recently under the name of Županijska Posavina. Its area of responsibility includes 14 settlements and the town of Županja.

### HOW DID IT ALL START?

In the night of the 16 May 2014, because of protracted and abundant rainfall in Slavonia and of the high water level wave arriving in those days from Slovenia and Bosnia, the Sava river swelled considerably at Županja, and the existing embankments had to be reinforced. The water rose especially fast in the night of 16 June at the most dangerous point reached by the water wave close to the Museum buildings. On the same night the manager of the Museum called in all the Museum staff, organised round the clock duty and started preparing the evacuation of the material (Fig. 1-2/p. 181).

After the on-site inspection by the representatives of the Croatian Water Agency, of the County and of the town of Županja on 16 May 2014 (12.12 p.m.), the prefect of Vukovar-Srijem County Božo Galić decided to declare the state of emergency for the area of the town of Županja, Bošnjaci, Drenovci, Gunja, Štitar and Vrbanja. The decision meant the third stage alert for the protection and rescue crisis management teams, civil protection, specialist water rescue teams, fire-fighting units from the area, Red Cross teams and the Croatian mountain rescue service. On the basis of this decision, the manager of the *Stjepan Gruber* Regional Museum decided to enforce the emergency evacuation of Museum material and proposed it for approval, in accordance with the Law on protection from natural disasters (*Official Gazette*, 73, 1997; 174, 2004), to the crisis management team of the County and of the town of Županja. In agreement with the County, the latter issued to the Županja Museum a certificate (No. 2212-01-14-1) for the enforcement of rescue and protection measures during the natural disaster. After the permits and agreements were procured, assistance in the

evacuation of museum material was wholeheartedly provided by the Vukovar City Museum and its manager Ružica Marić, who sent a museum vehicle and staff to help the staff in Županja, ensured the safe storage of the material, and provided assistance in the safeguarding of material during the floods in Županjska Posavina (Fig. 3/p. 182). Through various museum portals and e-mail messages the Županja Regional Museum sent out reports on conditions in the area, after which it received assistance from other museums and institutions, and the Ministry of Culture. The first to respond to calls for assistance were, among others, the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, several Slavonian museums (Đakovo, Slavonski Brod, Osijek Art Gallery, Museum of Slavonia, Vinkovci Museum); help arrived in museum equipment, and food, beverages and other necessities. In the same period the crisis management teams from the town and the County organised around the Museum buildings complete flood defence operations along the Sava embankment from the settlement of Štitar near Županja to Bošnjaci. Sand was delivered in front of the Museum buildings, sandbags filled, and food and refreshment provided for the flood control embankment defenders, with the round-the-clock support of the Museum staff (Fig. 4/p. 182).

After successful flood control operations in the Županja area, “supported” unfortunately by the breakdown of the embankment at Rajevo Selo which reduced the water pressure at Županja, a disastrous flood onslaught ensued in the settlements of Gunja, Rajevo Selo and Račinovci; the flood also partly struck parts of the villages of Strošinci, Đurinci and Posavski Podgajci (Fig. 5/p. 182).

On some homes, especially in Gunja and Rajevo Selo, the waters almost reached the roof, causing major material damage and suffering to the local population.

During these days many media reported all the details on the flood. After the partial withdrawal of the waters the area was inspected by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia - the Conservation Department in Vukovar and the staff of the Županja Regional Museum, the manager of the Županja Museum reported on the serious situation in the flood-struck villages at the MUIH (Museum Association of Eastern Croatia) meeting held on 30 May 2014, and informed all the museum officials of Slavonia. The meeting adopted some very important conclusions defining the preliminary operations and substantially supporting the plan of the heritage rescue action. On the basis of these conclusions adopted at the abovementioned MUIH meeting in Slavonski Brod, and on the initiative of Janja Juzbašić, M.S., manager of the *Stjepan Gruber* Regional Museum<sup>1</sup>, who reported on the condition of threatened heritage in the flooded area of Županjska Posavina and on the need for urgent post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery steps – in line with the action of the Museum Documentation Centre „Save the heritage from floods“, and with the overall assistance and support of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia – in early June 2014 all the museums, first of all in the area between the rivers Sava, Drava and the Danube were invited to provide help in the rescue of heritage in the flooded area, and in the villages of Gunja, Račinovci and Rajevo Selo. Following up, the first team visited the area on 2 June 2014; it included

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1 The region of Županjska Posavina, including the flood-affected villages, belongs to the area of responsibility of the *Stjepan Gruber* Regional Museum, and it is therefore quite clear that the Museum should initiate the whole heritage rescue action in the flood-stricken area.

the members of the staff of the *Stjepan Gruber* Regional Museum (Janja Juzbašić, M.S. and archaeologist Hrvoje Tkalac), the representatives of the Conservation Department in Vukovar (Zdenka Predrijevac, B.S., director, and architect Andrija Čavar), and the representative of the Conservation Department of Požega (Žarko Španiček, Ph.D.).

In connection with the planned launching of the rescue operation, an urgent meeting was held in Županja on 3 June 2014; it was called by the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek and MUIH (Museum Association of Eastern Croatia), and attended by directors of the Slavonia museums and art galleries, MUIH members. Specific tasks and basic procedures were agreed for rescuing heritage material. In particular, the meeting in Županja stressed the need for urgent field involvement of the museum team in order to gain better knowledge on conditions in the field.

### **DETERMINATION OF THE CONDITION OF HERITAGE MATERIAL IN THE FLOOD-STRICKEN AREA**

After the meeting in, the very next day a museum expert team visited the flooded Županjska Posavina villages of Račinovci, Đurići, Rajevo Selo, Gunja and Posavski Podgajci. The team included Janja Juzbašić (*Stjepan Gruber* Regional Museum; hereinafter SGRM), Ružica Marić (Vukovar City Museum), Ljubica Gligorević (Vinkovci City Museum, hereinafter VCM), Ljubica Ambinac Rajs (VCM), Hrvoje Tkalac (SGRM) and Tomislav Vukoja (VCM). During the visit they established that the waters had withdrawn considerably in all the less flooded parts of the involved settlements, leaving visible sign of damage on buildings, mobile property and the environment. Just as in earlier rounds of the flooded areas, the museum teams also met other field teams assessing damage on the buildings, sanitation teams and volunteer teams engaged in the cleaning of institutions and homes (taking out furniture, raising floors etc.), We also ran into smaller groups of local inhabitants visiting their homes. The museum team photographed the conditions in the streets and on buildings, churches, municipal buildings, culture centres, schools and kindergartens, cemeteries and some private homes. The visit produced extensive photographic evidence and a list of addresses of some home owners, presidents of cultural and performing societies, parish offices, crisis team members and other possible co-workers for future operations. The windows and doors on most homes were open, and home inventory (clothing, textile objects, furniture etc.), destroyed by the flood piled up on both sides of the main road and ready for disposal. We also met a few people visiting their homes. Since adobe is the material used for the traditional buildings of the area, with mud and lime mortar as binders, the walls absorbed water and got soaked. Because of that some homes had already collapsed. We assumed that some of them had collapsed soon after the flood, or were demolished by contractors engaged for the purpose because of safety reasons. Several building were marked by the construction inspection service drawing attention to the possibly hazardous structural condition of threatened or already collapsed or semi-collapsed buildings.

After the field visit, the members of the team concluded that the mobile and immobile cultural heritage, both the official heritage and other valuable heritage, had suffered

extremely serious damage. The next step meant deciding what could be done in order to save whatever could possibly be saved, along two lines:

- on the one hand, one of the objectives of the operation was to save as many valuable objects as possible, primarily privately owned traditional and town home furnishings, and valuable works of art in various institutions, especially churches, libraries, association facilities etc.;
- on the other hand, the public had to be informed how important it was to save the threatened heritage in order to launch the activities for the foundation of the Museum of *Cvelferija*, agreed by the municipalities of Drenovci, Vrbanja and Gunja before the flood.

## FIELD TEAMS

The directors of several Slavonian museum institutions agreed to form a number of larger teams, and on that basis the Ministry of Culture set up the *Crisis centre for rescuing heritage in the flood-stricken area*. Professional and support teams were formed next in order to speed up the collection of heritage objects and their accurate recording, determine the volume and degree of damage and define, with the assistance of other professional services, the rescue of preserved material.

The professional and support museum teams operated in coordination with the Crisis Centre of Vukovar-Srijem County and prefect Božo Galić, and the crisis centres of the municipalities of Gunja, Drenovci and Vrbanja, coordinated in their turn by Andrija Matić, director, the mayor of the municipalities of Drenovci Jakša Šestić, and the mayor of the municipality of Gunja Hrvoje Lucić. They prepared all the necessary accreditations, passes for field work and visits and secured agreement for object collection.

The comprehensive and coordinated action for the rescuing of heritage material in the flood-stricken parts of Županjska Posavina started on 13 June 2014. The teams first visited the premises of some associations (Fig. 6/p. 183). Thus, more than 20 national costume ensembles were rescued from water-soaked cupboards of the cultural and performing society in Gunja. So was the complete inventory of the *Sava* cultural and performing society in Rajevo Selo, stored in the basement of the local Culture Centre, under half a metre of water on the day of evacuation of the inventory. Museum teams together with the representatives of the municipality of Drenovci were the first to enter the premises of the Bosniak *Ljiljan* and *Behar* cultural and performing societies. They found that all the instruments and records were destroyed, including awards, gifts and the PA system (*Ljiljan*). Some of the damaged national costumes were found when the team visited in Gunja the home of Mr. Ibrahim Veisilović, head of the society. During the flood, national costumes of the *Račinovci* cultural and performing society, after the teams established contact with the president, were found in the homes of the society members, but even they were mostly destroyed. The national costume inventory also suffered extensive damage, as did traditional newly-made costumes and souvenirs of several embroidery associations, especially the goldwork embroiderers of Račinovci and Gunja. During the action a meeting was organised with the ethno-associations and representatives of cultural and performing societies (*KUDs*), and guidelines and suggestions were adopted for rehabilitating *KUD* inventory.

After their field visits the team leaders presented daily reports on their activity with lists of all homes visited during the day. Their numerous reports are filed in the Županja County Museum. Below we are presenting part of a report on the on-line inspection on 6 June 2014, drawn up by the following members of the team:

1. Ruža Marić, Vukovar City Museum;
2. Ljubica Gligorević, Vinkovci City Museum;
3. Ljubica Rajs, Vinkovci City Museum;
4. Hrvoje Tkalac, *Stjepan Gruber* Regional Museum, Županja;
5. Janja Juzbašić, *Stjepan Gruber* Regional Museum, Županja.

This is their report:

*Together with the mentioned members of the team, on 6 June 2014 we visited the flood-stricken area of županjska Posavina, i.e., the settlements of Račinovci, Đurići, Rajevo Selo, Gunja and Posavski Podgajci, and noted the following:*

#### **RAČINOVCI:**

*We first inspected the parish church of the Birth of St. John the Baptist in Račinovci. The church has not yet been disinfected or cleaned; on the altar there are whitework embroidered altar-cloths showing exactly the level reached by the water. The altar-cloths have dried up, and the other church textile objects are being dried. We talked to a member of the goldwork ethno-embroidery association the premises of which are (across the road) in the, Culture Centre. Some of the souvenirs they produced are completely destroyed (in the lower parts of the drawers-cupboards), while others are on the walls. The room has not yet been disinfected or cleaned. We visited the owner of a private collection of traditional objects, NENAD BAJINAC, at 116 Braće Radića, whose collection is buried under the ruins of a traditional šokci [Croatian ethnic group in Slavonia] house. Some of the objects are in the owner's yard. According to the assessment of the building inspection the house is marked for demolition. We also visited and inspected the house of ZVONKO BABIĆ, whose traditional objects are in a very poor condition but within a still standing šokci house. The house has been assessed, but has not been put down for demolition. During the visit we also talked with MARA MEŠTROVIĆ about the possible rescue of her traditional textile objects and similar objects in her neighborhood at 20 Braće Radića. We obtained information data on yet another owner of a private collection, LUKA MROŠEVAC (Ante Starčevića St.), but did not meet him and because of that we could not enter his house. We heard about the naive art collection of the ŠESTIĆ family, who own several pictures painted by their grandfather ZDENKO ŠESTIĆ. We did not find the owner and did not enter their house. We met many inhabitants waiting for the damage assessment teams and noted a number of traditional objects piled up in front of their homes.*

#### **GUNJA**

*During the first field inspection we could not enter the old church of St. James the Apostle, but this time it was unlocked and we managed to get in. The church has not yet been cleaned or disinfected, and on the wet floor there is still mud. The basic inventory of the church (pews and the altars) is disarranged, and there is a large church chandelier on the floor in the corner. We then visited the building of the Gunja municipality and the municipal services*

building. Inside there are still wet carpets, wet furniture and some paintings by local artists, and framed awards. The files are partly disarranged and partly drying on desks. From the municipal officer MARIO RAMAČ we found out that his parents at 114 M.A. Reljkovića had several valuable paintings, but we could not see them because the owners are currently not in Gunja. According to their son, their condition is very poor because the water in their house was about 2 m high. After that we visited the primary school where volunteers from the Faculty of Forestry in Zagreb, members of the “Alfa” special police unit from Zagreb and of the “Sharks” special police unit from Rijeka were cleaning the ground floor and the destroyed school library. On the first floor of the school we found a smaller school ethno-collection comprising traditional ceramic, wooden and metal vessels, and a (metal) instrument, a large trumpet. The school library is totally destroyed and the volunteers are removing all the inventory (shelves) and the books on the shelves. There is still wet mud on the library floor and throughout the ground floor. The removed school equipment (chairs, benches, computer equipment etc.) is piled up in the yard. In the first floor classrooms there are still pictures, painted mostly by the children, but also some smaller paintings by less well known local amateur artists.

#### ĐURIĆI

In the village we looked at a part which suffered less damage in the flood. This part of the settlement (close to the bridge), where about 20 houses were threatened by the flood, would require a more detailed inspection. The people in the village are cleaning their homes, and on the road there are smaller heaps of rubbish removed from the homes. We have not noted many traditional objects.

#### POSAVSKI PODGAJCI

We visited part of the road on the way out from the village where the water is low and people are cleaning their homes. This part would require another, more detailed visit and a more detailed on-site inspection. On the way out of the village we stopped by a disinfection check-point. Our car was disinfected, and we discarded our protective clothes into a container, and disinfected our footwear and hands.

During the collection of objects detailed lists were drawn up with a detailed object description. The following list of objects donated by Ružica Filipović from Gunja is an illustration in point (Fig. 8/p. 184).

#### List of objects marked according to the owner/donor

Place: Gunja

Donor: Ružica Filipović (artist)

Address: 21 (34) Miroslava Krleže

Date: 18 June 2014

No.	Name/description of object	Note	Remark
1	Scythe and sickle		
2	Yarn		
3	Chair		
4	Pitcher		

No.	Name/description of object	Note	Remark
5	Candles and candlestick		
6	Barrel		
7	Wooden vessel		
8	Table		
9	Goldwork picture	5 pieces	
10	Prayer book		
11	Paraffin lamp		
12	Tomato chinois		
13	Basket with various objects (grater etc.)		
14	Hoe		
15	Crutch		
16	Easel		
17	Barrel	3 pieces	
18	Bench		

Team work in the mentioned villages included rounds of the main and side streets, and homes in front of which the teams noted larger quantities of rubbish, especially when the team leaders concluded that it might contain traditional and other worthwhile objects.

The team leaders would then look for the owners of the discarded objects and talked with them, asking permission to separate certain objects and take them away for the future museum collection. The owners more or less agreed to get rid of them because they had anyway planned to do so fearing disease. After hearing from our team that we were picking up such objects for the future museum of *Cvelferija*, they enthusiastically welcomed the idea to have their property rescued in this way because at the time they had other existential problems.

The team also photographed the objects and recorded all the relevant data in writing (full name of the owner, address, settlement, and name of the object).<sup>2</sup> The objects were then loaded on trucks and transported to two depots.

The first 300 sq.m. depot was organised in Gunja, in the Cultural Centre, and the other in a 100 sq.m. room of the Culture Centre in Račinovci. The depots were secured by members of the Gunja and Drenovci municipal crisis teams. Unfortunately, the Gunja depot could not be disinfected before the objects were stored there because the collection action had already started, while the Račinovci depot was disinfected before the first objects were brought in. The museum teams worked in very difficult conditions, especially in the Gunja depot, and had to use protective clothing, masks, gloves and disinfectants because of possible infections. Only professional teams could enter the villages because provisional quarantine was enforced for the local population. In the first few days the teams only recorded potential groups of objects which were later collected. Because of the extensive area (three settlements) the museum teams were divided into

<sup>2</sup> For the recording of the basic data on the names of objects and their owners the professional team designed a form filled by hand and then computerised.

several groups working parallelly on three locations, and for the team leaders, the professionals and the assistants in charge of documentation, and object transport and storage, that was quite a strenuous operation.

Already during the collection of objects from the streets we also started to visit all the potential institutions and old *šokci* houses with the help of the owners and local civil servants, and local inhabitants who happened to be on the spot. Considering the very difficult living conditions (high humidity, mosquitoes, smells, no power, polluted water supply, closed shops and public institutions) most of the inhabitants of the flooded villages stayed in the villages only from 7 a.m. until 4 p.m. and then returned to their temporary shelter. All the inhabitants of the flooded villages and the members of the field teams had to undergo personal and car disinfection.

In the collection depots, restorers (for textile, wood, metal and works of art) also worked parallelly and indefatigably, recorded the condition of the collected objects and assessed the damage and preliminary cost of restoration.

### PREVENTIVE OBJECT PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING COLLECTED HERITAGE

After the collection of many objects, the crisis centres of Gunja and Drenovci assigned to the professional teams a few persons who started the basic object cleaning (mainly from mud, mould and other damage) under the vigilant supervision of the restorers. After only a week the teams collected and stored at the Gunja and Račinovci depots a considerable number of objects, and the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb took over the care for the many worthwhile textile objects. Some textile objects were only preventively (and manually) washed by the museum chars by museum charwomen or just dried before transport to the Restoration Workshop of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb for further treatment (Fig. 9-11/p. 184-185).

In the recording and appropriate preparation of the material for evacuation we were assisted by many ethnologists, restorers and other members of the staff of museums and other institutions, especially of the Slavonian museums and of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb (Aida Brenko, Marijana Najjar, Ljiljana Vilus Japec, Marko Gašparić and Matija Dronjić), whose presence on the ground was organised by the Central Museum Activities Dept. with its head, ethnologist Vesna Zorić, and employees of the Museum Documentation Centre (Iva Validžija) and its director Višnja Zgaga.<sup>3</sup>

3 Janja Juzbašić, ZMSG Županja; Antun Jelić, ZMSG Županja; Hrvoje Tkalac, ZMSG Županja; Katica Filipović, ZMSG Županja; Blaženka Filipović, ZMSG Županja; Zdenka Podrijavac, KO Vukovar; Andrija Cavar, KO Vukovar; Žarko Španiček, KO Požega; Ruža Marić, GMV Vukovar; Zoran Šimunović, GMV Vukovar; Ante Džalto, GMV Vukovar; Vilma Vidović, volunteer Vukovar; Ljubica Gligorević, GMV Vinkovci; Ljubica Rajs, GMV Vinkovci; Tomislav Vučkoja, GMV Vinkovci; Marija Sokola, GMV Vinkovci; Ilija Bilandžija, GMV Vinkovci; Krešo Marić, GMV Vinkovci; Miroslav Benaković, MSO Osijek; Vlasta Šabić, MSO Osijek; Ana Wild, MSO, Osijek; Stjepan Vidaković, volunteer, Osijek; Željka Čavčić, MBP, Slavonski Brod; Nikolina Mutavdija, MBP, Slavonski Brod; Danijela Ljubičić Mitrović, MBP, Slavonski Brod; Karolina Lukač, MBP, Slavonski Brod; Ante Ereiz, driver, MBP, Slavonski Brod; Darko Ivić, HRZ, Zagreb; Vladimir Kusik, GLUO, Osijek; Maja Balaš, GLUO, Osijek; Anamarija Kučan, GMV. Virovitica; Jasmina Jurković, GMV, Virovitica; Višnja Zgaga, MDC, Zagreb; Iva Validžija, MDC, Zagreb; Ivan Maso, driver, volunteer, Zagreb [ZMSG – Stjepan Gruber Regional Museum; KO – Conservation Department ; GMV Vinkovci/Vukovar/Virovitica City Museum; MSO – Museum of Slavonia; MBP – Museum of Brodsko Posavlje; GLUO – Art Gallery; EMZ – Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb; MDC – Museum Documentation Centre].

Thanks to the efforts of the staff members of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb and of the Museum Documentation Centre, and with the agreement of the Croatian Restoration Institute (CRI) and its director Mario Braun, part of the church vestments from the church in Račinovci was transported to the CRI Restoration Workshop in Ludbreg (Fig. 7/p. 183, 186).

Since many objects were collected from Gunja and Rajevo Selo, in late June 2014 the Gunja crisis centre provided an additional municipal facility, which had been disinfected a week before. The staff of the Županja Museum additionally whitewashed it. Thanks to the donation of the Croatian Museum Society and its president Milvana Arko-Pijevac and the Croatian Ethnological Society and president Zoran Čiča, the basic equipment for storing the collected material (shelves, plastic boxes) was provided along with printed inventory cards etc.

Throughout the action we delivered progress reports to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, the Museum Documentation Centre and the Museum Association of Eastern Croatia, and many other institutions and individuals, on the activities and involvement of museum staff. By pooling forces we managed to deal with all the difficulties in our heritage rescue operations. It has to be noted that the Ministry of Culture ensured all the necessary funding for the field work of the teams and for the preventive protection of the material.

The vehicle of the Vukovar City Museum, with the wholehearted support and agreement of its director Ružica Marić, and dedication of the staff of the Županja Regional Museum every day drove the teams to the area. Vehicles and teams of the Museum of Brodsko Posavlje, the Art Gallery in Osijek, the Vinkovci City Museum, the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek, the Virovitica Museum and the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb were also present on the ground on several occasions.

The representative of the Conservation Departments in Vukovar and Zagreb were consulted several times with regard to the procedures employed in the rescue of cultural monuments, and difficulties encountered in the protection of traditional architecture monument, especially those marked for demolition, and of church inventory in the parishes. Archival materials, e.g., church books and documentation like family albums, books etc., were taken care of with the great support of the State Archives in Zagreb and its director Vlatka Lemić, and assistant director for the protection of archival material Tatjana Mušnjak. Since the collected archival material was totally soaked, it had to be deep-frozen in order to prevent further deterioration. However, as there was no power in the flood-hit villages, the material was transported to Županja and stored in the museum refrigerator. After power returned to Račinovci, archive material was stored in a larger deep-freezer delivered for the purpose by the Museum of Brodsko Posavlje. After that the material was passed on to the Croatian State Archives.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, and also importantly, the assistant minister Vesna Juruić, M.S., and other associates of the Ministry of Culture were continuously informed, during the whole action, about the progress of the heritage rescue action and the field activities of the staff of the museums involved.

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4 The collected archival material was transported to the State Archive storage facilities in Zagreb and, in order to avoid fast thawing, immediately transferred to the freezer chamber.

In particular, we would like to note her written letter of thanks sent to the director of the *Stjepan Gruber* Regional Museum, and to all the museum experts and staff involved in coordinating the operation of rescue of valuable cultural heritage and tradition, after her official visit to the flood-stricken areas of Vukovar-Srijem County:

*We are particularly grateful for your welcome and for having organised – together with your associates from the Stjepan Gruber Regional Museum, the director of the Vukovar City Museum Ruža Marić and her staff, the assistant mayor of Županja Kruno Šarić, the mayor of the municipality of Gunja Hrvoje Lucić and of the municipality of Drenovci Jaška Šestić - this visit to the flood-hit area and the presentation of rescued ethnographic heritage as well as well as your ideas regarding future object restoration activities and possible public object presentation.*

*On behalf of my colleagues and associates – the head of the Museum-Art Gallery Service Eva Brunović, the Senior Service Adviser Tereza Teklić, Dubravka Osrecki Jakelić, head of the Croatian Museum Council, and Višnja Zgaga, head of the Museum Documentation Centre, and in my own name, I would once again like go express my appreciation of the dedication shown by you and all your colleagues who have taken part in this action focused on saving national cultural heritage. In particular, I would like to thank all the museum people for their awareness of the importance and need to preserve all the material cultural properties of the Republic of Croatia. I would especially like to thank you on behalf of the Minister of Culture Mrs Andrea Zlatac Zlatarić. Wishing you every success in your future dedication in the rescue of ethnographic material, books and traditional and everyday objects typical of Županjska Posavina, let me use the occasion to express the support of the Ministry of Culture for all future activities in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of cultural heritage in your area.*

In connection with the foregoing action, by September 2014 the Regional Museum collected a number of significant reports on the condition of traditional buildings, removed and collected material, documents on possible restoration of the material, prepared cost estimates for the rehabilitation of the rescued objects and launched the activities for preparing the exhibition. A report was also presented on the action “The Museum in the Pot” – the collection of households implements from the flood-stricken area. Preliminary discussions were also held regarding the foundation of the Museum of *Cvelferija*.

## **SUMMARY**

In June and July 2014, the *Stjepan Gruber* Regional Museum from Županja organised the heritage rescue action in the flooded areas of Gunja and Rajevo Selo. More than 50 museum professionals from Slavonia and Croatia, volunteers and civil servants took part in the action. The entire heritage rescue project was carried out with the generous assistance and support of the Ministry of Culture, and with the cooperation of the county and municipal flood protection crisis centres. More than 3,000 different ethnographic objects, paintings and other valuable cultural and historical material have been collected and documented, and will be presented in due time to the general public and probably, as planned, become an integral part of the inventory of the future Museum of *Cvelferija*.