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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INFORMATION SYSTEMS ON THE SOUND OF MEĐIMURJE: MEĐIMURJE SONGS AS CONFIRMATION OF MEĐIMURJE'S BELONGING TO THE CROATIAN CULTURAL, ETHNIC AND TERRITORIAL SPACE

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ABSTRACT

The paper on the topic: „Information Systems on the Sound of Međimurje: Međimurje Songs as Confirmation of Međimurje's Belonging to the Croatian Cultural, Ethnic and Territorial Space“, explores the importance of folk songs, the intangible cultural heritage of Međimurje, which was the key evidence of the identity of the Međimurje Croats in Međimurje who found themselves in Hungary at the beginning of the 20th century. Young Croatian intellectuals recognized the urgent need to develop the political consciousness of the Međimurje Croats, which led to their reunification with Croatia. The building of political and national consciousness among the Međimurje Croats was initiated by: Ivan Novak, Vinko Žganec, Luka Purić, Juraj Lajtman and Ignacije Lipnjak. Their work created the conditions for the liberation and annexation of Međimurje to Croatia after the First World War. Despite the systematic anti-Croatian propaganda in Međimurje, which was carried out through the administration, schools, culture, music and language, they managed to preserve the Croatian language, customs and folk songs that became evidence of the Croatian identity in Međimurje. Collecting Croatian Međimurje songs to preserve them from oblivion, Žganec had no idea that they would become the most valuable document and evidence that Croats live in Međimurje and that it is an integral part of Croatia, not Hungary. In collecting them, he had great help from Florijan Andrašec and Ivan Mustač Kantor.

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INTRODUCTION

The paper on the topic: „Information Systems on the Sound of Međimurje: Međimurje Songs as Confirmation of Međimurje's Belonging to the Croatian Cultural, Ethnic and Territorial Space“, explores the importance of folk songs, the intangible cultural heritage of Međimurje, which was the key evidence of the identity of the Međimurje Croat's in Međimurje who found themselves in Hungary at the beginning of the 20th century. In addition, the following hypotheses were set in the paper: H0: Professional associates at the school are equally informed about Međimurje folk songs with regard to the "expertise area", H₁: Professional associates at the school are equally informed about Međimurje folk songs with regard to age, H₂: The songs of Međimurje Croats, which thematically encompass homeland, nature, folk customs and life events, were not key to preserving cultural identity and belonging to the Croatian people at the beginning of the 20th century, and a

survey was conducted with the aim of accepting and/or rejecting the above hypotheses.

Međimurje at the Beginning of the 20th Century: Međimurje is the northwestern part of Croatia, located between the Mura and Drava rivers, which form the natural border with Slovenia and Hungary. In historical documents, we find different names for Međimurje: Island between the Mura and Drava rivers, Latin Insula, Insula inter Muram et Dravum, Insula Muro Dravanae, Insula Csaktomiensis, Hungarian Muraköz, German Murinsel, Croatian Međimorje and Hortus Croatiae – Flower Garden of Croatia (Kalšan 2006). The specific natural location, pleasant climate, nature, soil and water have attracted people to this area since ancient times. Today, Međimurje is a region of rich history, spiritual and material goods, diverse cultures and traditions. It covers an area of 453 km², and the relief divides it into Upper and Lower Međimurje. The population is predominantly Croatian, but it was inhabited in smaller numbers by: Germans, Hungarians and Slovenes. The beginning of the 20th century

was for Međimurje a time of industrial and mining development, the construction of infrastructure, schools, communal and health facilities, and a time of collecting songs; their tunes and manuscript collections of Croatian oral songs whose existence can be attributed to the combination of two important components: music and literature. It was also a time of implementing denationalization, especially in education and state administration, with the aim of completely Magyarizing the inhabitants of Međimurje to prevent any attempt to re-annex Međimurje to Croatia (Kalšan 2006). The Hungarians knew the people of Međimurje were not Hungarians and tried to change this by denationalization, systematic implementation of Magyarization, separation from the Zagreb Archdiocese and the creation of the so-called Međimurje people and language.

The traditional culture of the people of Međimurje, based on speech, song, costumes and customs, was a barrier that prevented Hungarians from entering the real life of Međimurje (Zvonar & Hranjec 1980). To circumvent this, the newspapers *Muraköz – Međimurje* and *Međimurski kalendar* were published, which in their Croatian sections published literary works in Croatian Kajkavian, as well as literary discussions in the column *Croatian Međimurje folk songs*. They did not deny the Croatian nationality of the Croats of Međimurje, but they tried to determine the general characteristics of Međimurje folk songs by stating that they were influenced by Croatian songs along the Croatian border, Slovenian songs along the Slovenian border, and Hungarian songs along the Hungarian border (Bartolić 1991).

The resistance to Hungarian policy in Međimurje was provided by the young Croatian intelligentsia, who saw where such a policy was leading and began to gather in a kind of Croatian national movement of Međimurje that would affirm the awareness and affiliation of Međimurje to the Croatian national identity. The central figure in it was Ivan Novak (Kalšan V. & Kalšan J. 2012). Their work was also supported by Pero Magdić, who launched the newspaper *Naše pravice* in Varaždin, whose task was to speak openly about our Croatian brothers in Međimurje and the Bunjevac Croats in Hungary. Thanks to *Naše pravice*, the Croatian national movement crossed the Drava and entered Međimurje, and the Međimurje issue became an integral part of the political struggle of the entire Croatian people in all Croatian regions. Magdić did not stop at newspapers. It was necessary to prove that Međimurje was also a legal part of Croatia. For this reason, he invited Rudolf Horvat to write a complete history of Međimurje based on state and legal grounds. The book was published in 1907 under the title *History of Međimurje*. Ivan Novak did the same, who at that time also published his brochure *The Truth about Međimurje*, in which he stated that the process of Magyarization was slowly erasing Croatian consciousness and culture in Međimurje, which is particularly recognizable in their perception of Croats as men in dirty underpants, without coats, with a bag over their shoulders and in sandals – men with perpetually bent and gloomy faces, and Hungarians with tight trousers, in a coat with cords, an upright, cheerful face and a spiky mustache (Heršak & Šimunko 1990).

According to Novak, Croatia was pursuing the wrong policy towards Međimurje. The only thing they emphasized was the unification of Međimurje with Croatia, which put the Croats of Međimurje at a disadvantage towards Hungary. Novak believed that it was currently sufficient to culturally elevate the Croats of Međimurje, encourage the priests and the small

Croatian intelligentsia in Međimurje to maintain the Croatian identity in Međimurje. The Croatian public at that time knew little about Međimurje, and if they did know anything about them, Međimurje was just a country across the Drava in the southern part of Hungary, which for them was a province in cultural and political terms. This view had to be changed, and one way to do this was to collect folk songs in Međimurje, about which Vinko Žganec (Kalšan V. & Kalšan J. 2012) says: Others have documents, pyramids, and we must be content with some bar of the song, some verse (Bartolić 2009).

The First World War led to the resolution of the Međimurje issue through a military intervention that took place on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1918, and which ended with the liberation of Međimurje. In order to avoid any international complications, since the military intervention violated the armistice, the legitimacy of the military intervention had to be obtained, which was achieved by holding national assemblies in towns and municipalities where the people of Međimurje declared their support for joining Croatia, i.e. the new State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. On January 9, 1919, Čakovec, the administrative center of Međimurje, became the place where the national assembly was held, at which the Resolution was adopted separating Međimurje from the Hungarian state (Bartolić 2001). After the Resolution, the Međimurje Folk Evening was held in Zagreb on February 2, 1919, at which Ignacije Lipnjak (biskupija-varazdinska.hr 2021) and his choir performed Croatian folk songs from Međimurje, while Žganec gave a lecture on Međimurje and Međimurje Folk Songs, where he emphasized, among other things: Croats in Croatia had some kind of freedom, Croats in Hungary did not even dare to say that they were Croats.

Songs from Međimurje: The historical heritage, cultural creativity and life in Međimurje have preserved the personality of the Međimurje Croats and their affiliation with the Croatian Kajkavian circle. This is expressed in over 2000 different songs that thematically relate to their homeland, nature, folk customs, joy and youth, marriage, death, forbidden love, farewells when men leave for military service or to work in other countries and regions. Everything that was important to the Međimurje Croat was found in his songs and for this reason they are taken as a historical document that establishes the identity of the Croats in Međimurje. A special place in the preservation of Croatian identity in Međimurje is held by Vinko Žganec, who belongs to the Croatian intelligentsia that worked to raise Croatian national consciousness by making people culturally and politically aware of the belonging of the Međimurje Croats to Croatia: only a culturally awakened Međimurje citizen will be able to shake off the national dream and indifference, and for this reason, the Međimurje Croat should be given 'the first prerequisite for further cultural activity and that is national consciousness (Bartolić 2003).

He began to engage in church music at the age of ten: As a boy from the age of ten, I played the short song in church. As a twenty-year-old young man, he advocated Cecilian ideas in church music, which is particularly evident in his lecture entitled *On Croatian Folk Church Songs*, where he emphasizes that church folk songs should be preserved and nurtured as a valuable spiritual heritage that we will pass on to future generations: In the abundance of our true and pure folk church songs lies an invaluable treasure of deep religious poetry: this poetry should be discovered and allowed to shine in the Croatian temples of God (Vuk 1977). Before publishing a

booklet that would later have a great influence on the affirmation of the folk movement in Croatian art music, Croatian Folk Songs from Međimurje in 1916, he recorded his first folk song from Međimurje, *Megla se kadi, hajdina cvete*, in Vratišinec in 1908. This is also the moment when Croatian folk poetry in Međimurje began, but also the moment that is considered the beginning of his ethnomusicological work (Bartolić 1978). Žganec realized that the true wealth lies undiscovered in the Croatian folk songs of Međimurje, each of which he says is an original whole with its own characteristics and Slavic meaning. In his youth, as a student and seminarian, he certainly belonged to the Right-wing Starčević youth, which can be confirmed by the fact that he published his works in the Right-wing newspapers *Hrvatstvo*, *Mlada Hrvatska* and *Hrvatsko pravo*, in which, looking at the people at work, in the family, in church and in the cemetery, he presents a gloomy picture of his Međimurje and emphasizes that it is important for the people of Međimurje to emphasize the historical and constitutional arguments that they are Croats at all times (Bartolić 2003).

At that time, Vinko Žganec wrote under the pseudonym Miška Prprišov, Mesopotamac or Mesop. Since 1906, he has been a contributor to the Croatian youth magazine *Pobratim*, the children's literary magazine *Nada* and the magazine *Hrvatska prosvjeta*. Since 1911, he has been a contributor to the magazine *Sv. Cecilija*, where he publishes music reviews and articles in which he discusses various problems with music. In his youth, Žganec did not rule out the possibility of starting a national revolution to annex Međimurje to Croatia. The cultural and political struggle for Međimurje needed to be given legitimacy, and this could only be done by transferring it from Croatia to Hungary, which at that time Međimurje belonged to. To this end, in 1908, together with Juraj Lajtman, he held an assembly of the Catholic People's Alliance in Vratišinec, the purpose of which was to educate and enlighten the people on Catholic foundations, by distributing Catholic newspapers and holding national assemblies, under whose auspices two years later the *Calendar of the Catholic People's Alliance* would begin to be published in the Croatian language in Budapest. In the fight for Međimurje, as an established and mature person, Žganec represented more moderate views. First of all, he believed that the Catholic Croats of Međimurje should be won over, because he knew that the fight for Međimurje would be successful only if the Christian Catholic tradition was included in it, through which the cultural, national and political enlightenment of the Croats of Međimurje would be achieved and their assimilation among the Hungarians would be prevented: the peasant from Međimurje is an ardent supporter of the Catholic Church, for which he would sacrifice everything in possible cases (Bartolić 2003).

There was no question of any territorial unification with Croatia, which was advocated by the right-wing party at the time, at that time because there were no conditions for it. In resolving the Međimurje issue, Žganec called for the preservation of Croatian national consciousness in Međimurje, emphasizing Croatia's historical right to Međimurje. He got to know his Međimurje people by studying their cultural and literary life, as evidenced by the text in Croatian Law entitled *Međimurje spava*. In the article, he describes the Međimurje education system, church, economy and Croatian language as arguments for Croatia's historical right to Međimurje. At the same time, he tries to influence the awakening of the national

consciousness of the Međimurje Croats by developing awareness of what a nation, nationality, mother tongue, homeland and patriotism are. He looks back at Croatian folk songs that have Croatian lexical garb but Hungarian melodic content (Bartolić 2003). By collecting and publishing folk songs, he presented to the Croatian public the previously unknown wealth of Međimurje folk creativity and at the same time saved them from oblivion. To achieve his goals, Žganec worked closely with his friend, the Kotor parish priest Jurj Lajtman (Kalšan V. & Kalšan J. 2012). He helped him lead the church choir, and Lajtman provided Žganec with musical, moral and organizational support in saving Croatian folk songs from Hungarian assimilation. At that time, Žganec wrote down numerous Međimurje songs, among which the famous folk song *Zvira voda iz kamena* deserves special mention. He also recorded the *Popijevke od kola* and the songs *O Jelo Jelica*, *Pod kopinom*, *Turki robe*, *Ta divojka, ka junakom draga*, *Vu polju nam jasrica pšenica*. The words of these songs represent the oldest cultural and musical document found about Međimurje.

There is no doubt at all for Žganec that the people of Međimurje are Croats, not Hungarians. He believes that the texts of Međimurje songs are clear and certain proof that the native language of the people of Međimurje is Croatian, not Hungarian. As the head of the parish in Dekanovec, he founded a girls' choir there that performs newer Croatian songs, wishing to strengthen the ties between the Croats of Međimurje and Croatia as much as possible. After the war, the so-called Međimurje Cultural Circle was founded, consisting of Vinko Žganec, Ivan Novak, Josip Štolcer Slavenski, Ladislav Kralj Međimurec, Nikola Pavić and Lujo Bezeredi. The circle was founded with the aim of returning Međimurje to the Croatian ethnic, cultural and economic space. The Croatian folk heritage of Međimurje was what could legitimize Međimurje before the Croatian cultural, scientific and political public, and it was also the strongest weapon in the fight for the survival of a part of the Croatian people in their fight for national identity. That Međimurje is part of the Croatian cultural identity and belongs to Croatian culture is evident in the Croatian Folk Songs from Međimurje, which, in addition to their great literary and musical value, also had a significant political role. It was this collection of songs that was the main ethnological evidence that established Međimurje's belonging to the Croatian ethnic space at the Trianon Peace Conference (Kalšan V. 2006).

Croatian folk songs from Međimurje caused a great sensation. They presented the people of Međimurje for the first time as a people who, with the originality, diversity and richness of their melodies, form a whole world of their own. Many of them showed the extent to which the spirit of neighboring peoples influenced the people of Međimurje. For example, the influence of Hungarian music is felt in the rhythm, and since Međimurje is located on the border with Slovenia, the influence of Styrian folk music is also noticeable.

The most important thing of all is the similarity of these melodies with the naive older melodies of our Kajkavian regions. The book was printed at the right time, just when the Slavic significance of Međimurje needed to be proven, because it was the folk songs that gave documentary value to its native and national identity. They will also play an important role in studying the development of Croatian art music and Croatian Kajkavian lyrics. In its preface, Žganec

states that these songs are a clear illustration of the thematic division of Međimurje poetry into two basic anthologies of poems: church (www.zupa-sveti-juraj.hr 2013) and secular. Here again, he emphasizes how he is trying to preserve them from oblivion in this way: Their significant beauty, their rich and original motifs have compelled me to preserve these songs from oblivion and ruin, into which they would surely fall over time. In the same place, he writes that the book is intended for the Croatian intelligentsia, which should, with its help, get to know Međimurje better: The book is intended primarily for the Croatian intelligentsia, so that through it they can get to know the soul and artistic power of a branch of the Croatian people, who live beyond the reach of almost any Croatian culture (Žganec 1971). By publishing it, he decided to return the Međimurje folk song to its original roots and show that the Croatian people have always lived in Međimurje (Žganec 2015):

From most of these seemingly modest songs, it will be seen that the spirit of the Međimurje people has been Slavic from the beginning. Furthermore, he wrote that the Croatian folk songs from Međimurje are like Russian, Slovak and Ruthenian (Ukrainian) songs, which also proves that the people of Međimurje have always been Slavs: This is shown not only by the poetic motifs, which are the property of almost all Slavic peoples, especially the southern Slavs. When judging the national significance of these songs, one should first pay attention to the Slovak, Ruthenian and Russian folk songs (Žganec 1971). He left the lyrics of the songs in the form in which they were sung and pronounced by the people so that they could provide a faithful picture of the Međimurje Kajkavac dialect, which he considers one of the most beautiful and purest Kajkavac dialects of the Croatian language. Žganec says of the old folk song that it has a certain peaceful intimacy in it. In determining the age of these songs, he used their specific linguistic and musical characteristics and their division into three basic groups according to content and purpose. In the first group, he ranked songs that have a general Slavic character (children's songs, wedding songs, humorous songs, social songs, songs about nature and songs that are performed with dancing). The second group consists of original Međimurje songs that are characteristic only for this region, while the third group includes those songs in which foreign influence is felt, especially Hungarian, Croatian and Slovak (Žganec 2015).

Collectors and Singers of Folk Songs: The influence of the folk Kajkavian song from Žganec's book encouraged many folk poets and writers, such as Florijan Andrašec (Bartolić 1978), whom Vinko Žganec mentions when he speaks of folk collectors and singers in the preface to the Croatian Folk Songs from Međimurje, which were published in 1924. I found this man in Dekanovec sometime in 1916. He knew all sorts of folk songs. From his singing, I recorded almost all the songs sung in Dekanovec and the surrounding area. The collections that Žganec later published contain many songs that were collected by Andrašec, but the Croatian Folk Songs printed in 1916 do not contain one of his songs. This is an unusual and inexplicable fact, since Andrašec's talent for music was noticed by the priest and Žganec's friend Juraj Lajtman, who stayed in Dekanovac from 1905 to 1908, so it is quite certain that Žganec knew Andrašec even then. One of Andrašec's first poems, *Lijepo naše Međimurje*, dates from this period, in which, at a time of frequent implementation of Magyarization in Međimurje, he publicly expresses his belief

that Međimurje belongs to Croatia: The people of Međimurje love/defend justice in their ancestral way /forever be pure Croatian/and fight for brotherly love! At the time of the printing of Croatian Folk Songs from Međimurje, Andrašec was most likely writing and singing. There are indications that his poem *Ljepo naše Međimurje* was written in 1905, the poem *Mjesec* in 1914, and the poem *Želja za domom* in 1915 (Bartolić 2009). Andrašec is probably the only Croatian writer of his time who wrote his entire opus in the Croatian-Kajkavian language, and at the same time he is a Croatian writer who can be said to be the last offshoot of old Croatian Kajkavian literature. His creativity came from the rich Međimurje folklore heritage, which found its full expression in his creation of tunes and texts in which he relied on spiritual, but also secular poetry and musical creativity. Florijan Andrašec (Kalšan V. & Kalšan J. 2012) left behind in manuscript the humorous-satirical epic *Jandrašov Ivek* and the book of folk customs *Međimurski šega*, and he also partially prepared folklore material for Odak's (Odak 2021) opera *Dorica pleše*, while according to some information he also composed the opera *Konjara*. For Žganec he collected and sang some of the most popular Međimurje folk songs: *Ružica sam bila*, *Zimske so nam doge noći*, *Stopram sem se oženil* (Bartolić 1978). Under Žganec's influence, Andrašec spread Cecilian ideas (Hrvatska enciklopedija 2021) in church singing, popularizing Međimurje secular songs that influenced the awakening of Croatian national consciousness among the Međimurje Croats. Thanks to Andrašec and Žganec, Dekanovec is considered the epicenter from which Croatian oral song began to conquer Croatia and the world, becoming the most sung Croatian village, and Florijan Andrašec the spiritual father of all folk poets who lived and still live in Međimurje. Confirmation of his entry into the literary life of Međimurje can be found after 1918 in *Međimurske novine*, *Glas Međimurja i Zagorje*, *Veliki Međimurskom kalendar*, *Hrvatski (narodni) Međimurskom kalendar* and *Hrvatski (narodni) Zagorskom kalendar*, where he published the largest number of his poetic and narrative works, dominated by three types of texts: *kolendariad*, *dudashijad* (versified humorous stories) and *crnice* (prose adaptation of humorous anecdotes). Having entered the literary life of Međimurje, Andrašec made an invaluable contribution to the development of Međimurje into an authentic entity of Croatian culture, which would be one of the arguments that proved that Hungarian claims to Međimurje were unfounded.

The end of World War I on the battlefield did not mean the end of the Hungarian struggle for Međimurje. By spreading Međimurje secular songs, Andrašec contributed to the awakening of national consciousness and the love of the Međimurje people for their centuries-old disputed cultural tradition and Croatian name. An extensive collection of texts and melodies of Međimurje folk songs entitled *Međimurje Folk Songs* was compiled by Ivan Mustač (Kalšan V. & Kalšan J. 2012), a cantor at Sveta Marija. His talent is recognized in the compositions and arrangements of Međimurje folk songs of spiritual and secular content that he wrote for choirs. He received his musical education by attending the four-year Brevar organ school for cantors in Celje. In collecting the songs that were created in Međimurje, Žganec states that he had great help from local people: In some villages I had excellent helpers, local organists, who worked hard and sketched folk melodies themselves and came to me, and I revised their notes based on their singing (Žganec 2015). So, like Florijan Andrašec, Ivan Mustač also collected

songs for Žganec, which he also testifies to in his notes: I highlight the organist at Sv. Marija, his student Ivan Mustač, who also recorded a good number of folk songs from his town (Žganec 2015). Like Andrašec, Mustač had a natural musical gift that was recognized by the priest Ignacije Lipnjak. At his urging, young Ivan's parents sent him to the Bervar organ school in 1916, where he remained until 1918. In addition to the artistic-pedagogical and church-musical, the Bervar organ school also had a patriotic mission through which Cecilian ideas were spread among the Croats of Međimurje in Međimurje and the development of national awareness of the beauty and value of folk secular and church songs was encouraged. The school encouraged its students to be oriented towards the Indigenous musical culture and its sources, that is, towards their own centuries-old and rich musical heritage in Međimurje folk songs to save the songs from the increasing Hungarian musical influence (Vuk 1985). In the spirit of the Magyarization of Međimurje, Hungarian songs or Međimurje songs in derivatives such as *Pastiri stante se*, *hitro se genite* were also performed in churches. Upon his return to Međimurje, after taking over the church choir, Mustač encountered resistance from part of the rural population, but by 1919 he had a mixed choir of St. Cecilia of 50 singers who performed Christmas songs from the Croatian Chorale and Cantual, Easter songs from the Croatian Church Hymnal, as well as old Međimurje songs. The job of an organist required daily participation in Holy Mass, and on Sundays and holidays, two or three Masses. It also included leading the church's mixed and male choir, tamburitza ensemble, brass band and string ensemble, singing *Spricavanje* at funerals, and participating in choir festivals throughout Croatia. In addition to this job, Mustač was also the village postman, like Andrašac. In addition to all this, he collected over 300 Međimurje folk songs and texts of spiritual and secular content. He had a good collaboration with Andrašec, especially in the arrangement of his poems.

RESULTS

The chapter "research results" presents the results based on the online survey conducted. The survey collected data from 45 respondents, so the convenience sample was 45 (N=45). The average duration of the survey per respondent was 6 minutes and 7 seconds. The survey was conducted in 2025, 201 days.

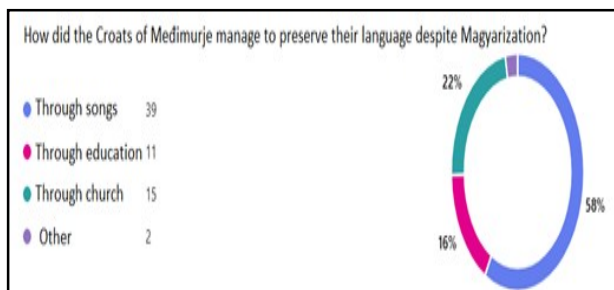


Figure 1. A depiction of how the Međimurje Croats managed to preserve their language despite Magyarization

Figure 1 shows the way in which the Croats of Međimurje managed to preserve their language despite Magyarization. The most respondents, 58%, chose the option "through songs", followed by the church (22% of respondents), while 11% of respondents chose the option "through education".

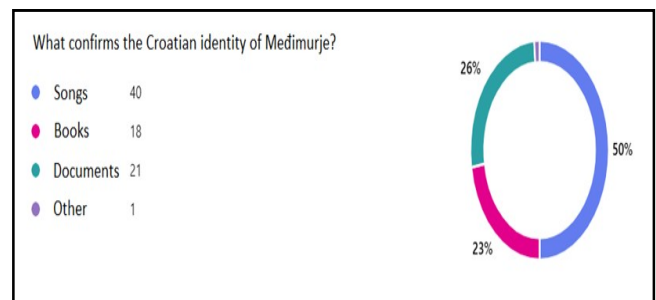


Figure 2. Results of respondents' opinions confirming the Croatian identity of Međimurje

Figure 2 shows the results of respondents' opinions on what confirms the Croatian identity of Međimurje. The Croatian identity of Međimurje is confirmed most by poems, according to the opinion of as many as 50% of respondents. After that, the Croatian identity of Međimurje is confirmed by books, according to the opinion of 26% of respondents, while documents, according to the opinion of 23% of respondents, confirm the identity of Međimurje.

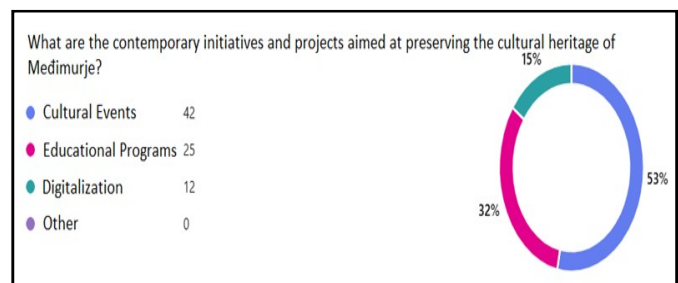


Figure 3. Overview of contemporary initiatives and projects aimed at preserving the cultural heritage of Međimurje (according to respondents)

Figure 3 shows contemporary initiatives and projects aimed at preserving the cultural heritage of Međimurje (according to the opinion of the respondents). Most respondents (53%) believe that cultural events are most aimed at preserving the cultural heritage of Međimurje. Then, according to the opinion of 32% of respondents, educational programs are aimed at preserving the cultural heritage of Međimurje, and finally, the digitalization of Međimurje cultural heritage (according to the opinion of 15% of respondents). Based on the survey results and the study of the presented literature, the hypothesis H_0 : Professional associates at school are equally informed about Međimurje songs with regard to their "professional field" is accepted, the hypothesis H_1 : Professional associates at school are equally informed about Međimurje songs with regard to their age is accepted, the hypothesis H_2 : The songs of Međimurje Croats, which thematically encompass the homeland, nature, folk customs and life events, were not key to preserving cultural identity and belonging to the Croatian people at the beginning of the 20th century is accepted.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Vinko Žganec, as a member of the young Croatian intelligentsia, in an effort to actualize the issue of Međimurje and to gain the support of the Croatian public in the fight against the Magyarization and complete assimilation of Međimurje into the Hungarian ethnic space, focused on: journalistic activity, collecting and recording Croatian folk

songs, but also nurturing the love of the Međimurje Croats for Croatia as their true homeland. In this effort, young Međimurje residents were encouraged to study to become teachers, lawyers, priests, notaries, etc., so that after their education they would stand up for their Međimurje. Through their work, they would raise the national awareness of the Međimurje Croats so that they would be ready to join Croatia when the time came. Through his work on collecting Croatian folk songs, Žganec sought to show not only music experts in Croatia, but also those outside of it, that the Croatian people have always lived in Međimurje, and that despite systematic Magyarization, they managed to preserve their Croatian language, their folk songs, and customs. By presenting a picture of Međimurje at the beginning of the 20th century, Žganec emphasized the particularly important role of Croatian folk songs and church choirs in preserving Croatian national consciousness among the Croats of Međimurje. Any public political work that represented Croatianness was punishable in Hungary. The only way to preserve national consciousness in Međimurje was cultural work. Song and choirs became strongholds for preserving the Croatian language, and in this way, Croatianness was nurtured in Međimurje. Indirectly, it was Croatian folk songs that maintained Croatian national consciousness among the members of the choirs, and through them it spread to their families and communities. Žganec's collection of Croatian folk songs from Međimurje, printed in 1916 in Zagreb at the peace conference on June 4, 1920, at the Trianon Palace in Versailles near Paris, became the crowning proof that the inhabitants of Međimurje spoke the Croatian language, that they were Croats, and that Međimurje should belong to Croatia. People like Andrašac, Mustač, and Žganec revealed the richness of folk music to the Croats of Međimurje, primarily through church songs.

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