

DO THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS IN SLOVENIA FACE PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION?

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ABSTRACT

Do Third Country Nationals in Slovenia Face Prejudice and Discrimination?

Abstract: This article presents the results of a study on Third Country Nationals [TCNs] who live in Slovenia. The article focuses on discrimination on ethnic and racial grounds and explores whether TCNs experience discrimination on these grounds in five areas of their lives: housing, schooling, health care, the labour market and in contacts with public administration. The author identifies three factors that at least partially explain the different experiences and degrees of discrimination reported by interviewees. Key words: Third Country Nationals, ethnic discrimination, racial discrimination, prejudice, language

IZVLEČEK

Ali se državljani tretjih držav v Sloveniji soočajo s predsodki in diskriminacijo?

Članek ponuja vpogled v rezultate študije o državljanih tretjih držav, ki živijo v Sloveniji. Posebno pozornost namenja etnični in rasni diskriminaciji in ponuja odgovor na vprašanje, ali državljani tretjih držav doživljajo diskriminacijo na petih področjih svojega življenja – na področju šolstva, zaposlovanja in trga dela, zdravstva, v stikih z javno upravo ter pri urejanju stanovanjskega vprašanja. Avtorica opredeljuje tri dejavnike, ki vsaj delno pojasnjujejo, zakaj so nekateri intervjuvanci bolj izpostavljeni diskriminaciji kot drugi.

Ključne besede: državljani tretjih držav, etnična diskriminacija, rasna diskriminacija, predsodki, jezik

INTRODUCTION

Several studies (Komac 2007; Pajnik et al. 2010; Medica 2010; Žitnik 2006; Zavrtnik Zimic et al. 2008) have been conducted on the situation of immigrants and their degree of integration into Slovenian society. Some of these studies (Brezigar 2007; Bešter 2007; Medvešek et al. 2009; Pajnik et al. 2010) have dealt at least partially with discrimination on ethnic grounds. However, most of the research on discrimination on ethnic grounds in Slovenia has been focused on the sphere of employment and the labour market, leaving almost totally unexplored other areas of an immigrant's life, such as housing or access to health care. Moreover, the focus of such research has always been on *ethnic* discrimination,

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rather than *racial* discrimination, since the dominant share of immigrants in Slovenia differ from the majority population on the basis of ethnic origin only, rather than racial traits (Klemenčič and Žagar 2004: 217–221, 295–296).¹

The aim of this paper is to show, on the basis of a study conducted on a specific group of immigrants, namely third country nationals (TCNs),² the life experiences of TCNs living in Slovenia in five areas of their life (housing, schooling, health care, labour market and contacts with public administration). The focus of the paper is to determine whether TCNs experience discrimination due to their different ethnic and racial origin, and if they do, to identify the factors that most likely contribute to a different and/or less favourable treatment of TCNs or some subgroup of TCNs.

THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS IN SLOVENIA

Although in the past decades more interest has been shown in the study of immigrants with Slovenian citizenship (Komac and Medvešek 2005; Josipovič 2006; Komac 2007; Bešter 2007), more recently the focus has shifted to groups of immigrants without Slovenian citizenship, who are commonly referred to as third country nationals (TCN) (Pajnik et al. 2010; Golja 2007, 2008; Medica et al. ed. 2010; Bešter and Medvešek ed. 2010), and special attention has been paid to their situation in the labour market (Pajnik et al. 2010; Brezigar 2010; Medica 2010). One of the reasons for this shift in research focus is obviously the drastic changes in the economic situation and the labour market in the past few years. After two decades of economic growth that was possible solely due to the large proportion of the immigrant labour force, mostly employed in less attractive and lower paying jobs, the severe economic downturn marked a new era in the life of immigrants in Slovenia. Unemployment rose, while the construction sector, which relies heavily on the work of immigrants, suffered a severe economic downturn, and a considerable number of large construction companies declared bankruptcy. As a response to this crisis Slovenia drastically reduced its immigrant quotas: while in 2008 the quota for immigrant workers was fixed at 32,000, in 2009 it amounted to only 24,000, and in 2010 it was further reduced to 12,000 (Pajnik et al. 2010: 157). These reductions were based on the premise that a large number of TCNs would leave the country once their temporary work permits and/or contracts expired and they would not be able to find another job. In 2009 the Government adopted a regulation that prohibits all seasonal work other than in agriculture and forestry (*Uredba o omejitvah in prepovedih zaposlovanja in dela tujcev*). Since the regulation explicitly limits the employment of TCNs from Kosovo, it also represents a case of clear (if indirect) discrimination based on ethnicity. Pajnik et al. (2010: 158) also report an increasing number of

1 According to Art. 1 of the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, racial discrimination is “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin”. Ratcliffe (1994: 6) proposes the following explanation of the use racial and ethnic discrimination: in some environments ethnicity and ethnic origin are used as synonymous for race and racial origin. In Great Britain, for example, Pakistanis, Germans and Chinese are all referred to as ethnic minorities. Moreover, in countries such as Germany or Israel, where the memory of holocaust is still vivid, they strictly avoid the term race. On the other hand in the United States of America, where most theoretical frameworks on discrimination were conceived, they mainly use the term racial discrimination (Ratcliffe 1994: 6).

Ethnic discrimination can, however, be understood as a sub-type of racial discrimination: while ethnic discrimination is mostly based on ethnic origin, the definition of racial discrimination, as explained above, encompasses a component related to skin colour (Bulmer 1986: 54).

Although in Slovenia we mostly use the term ethnic minorities and therefore the term ethnic discrimination would be more appropriate, in this paper I decided to use the term racial discrimination, too, as suggested by Bulmer (1986). The main reason for this decision is to differentiate between those TCNs (see note 3) in Slovenia that experience discrimination because of the colour of their skin, and those who do not.

2 Third Country Nationals (TCNs) are according to the Slovenian Aliens Act nationals of all countries that are not members of the European Union.

patriotic groups and associations that promote the national values of “being Slovene” and *de facto* act against any form of diversity, including ethnic affiliation, as well as political initiatives requiring action to reduce the number of immigrants that “steal jobs” from the local population (Pajnik et al. 2010: 159). In such a hostile environment, it does not come as a surprise that the focus of research on immigrants shifted strongly towards TCNs and their situation in the labour market.

However, recent studies on TCNs have focused mostly on those employed in less attractive and lower paying jobs (Pajnik et al. 2010) or on workers in the construction sector (Medica 2010), those who were identified also by the media as those facing the most severe problems and who had immigrated mostly from the Balkans. These studies left unexplored the situation of a smaller number of TCNs – those migrating from other parts of the world, e.g. Africa or Asia, and performing other jobs that are not necessarily strictly on the lowest level of the employment pyramid. Moreover, the focus on the labour market being driven by severe economic problems overshadowed the question about what happens in other areas of an immigrant’s life, such as health, schooling or housing. Do TCNs in Slovenia encounter problems in these areas of their life, do they experience discrimination, or, e.g. how easily do they find an apartment? The aim of this paper is to explore these questions based on the results of the study “Integration of Third Country Nationals in Slovenia” that was carried out in 2008 and 2009 by researchers of the Institute for Ethnic Studies in Ljubljana, Slovenia.³

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was based on an analysis of the legal framework that shapes integration processes in Slovenia and on a secondary analysis of statistical data and other relevant sources. The main part of the study consisted in conducting semi-structured interviews with individuals and focus groups. The target group was defined on the basis of a corrected snowball sample. In these interviews, data and perceptions on five areas of integration of TCNs were collected. These areas were defined as follows: housing, the labour market and employment, schooling, health care and contacts with public administration. The sample of TCNs comprised 13 males and 9 females, originating from the countries of the area of the former Yugoslavia, the countries of the Russian Federation, Asia, countries of the African continent, Brazil and Australia.

One of the main strengths of the study is that interviews with individuals and focus groups were carried out with two audiences: on one hand, experiences and perceptions of TCNs were collected through 21 individual interviews, as explained above; on the other hand, experiences and perceptions of the majority Slovenian population were collected through individual interviews and focus groups with civil servants, teachers and health professionals (40 interviewees altogether). The study therefore provides a mirror image, where perceptions of TCNs about the majority population can be combined with perceptions of the majority population about TCNs, thus facilitating a better understanding of the dynamics that shape the relationship between the two groups; this has an important impact on recognising and evaluating instances of discrimination, lack of discrimination or reverse discrimination.

Nevertheless, given the limited number of interviewees among the TCNs, it should be noted that the study represents a first step towards ascertaining the status quo of this population, rather than a conclusive study on their situation in Slovenia.

3 For additional details on the project see: Integracija državljanov tretjih držav, in Institute for Ethnic Studies, Research Activity, Finished Projects, 2009, <http://www.inv.si/Dokumenti/dokumenti.aspx?iddoc=602&idmenu1=258&lang=eng>, 10.1.2012.

While the study includes perceptions of both TCNs and the majority population with respect to integration, it is inevitable that this kind of inclusive methodology has a more theoretical than practical value when we focus on discrimination and unfavourable treatment alone. As previous qualitative studies (Brezigar 2007, 2007a) have shown, the majority population's ability to detect instances of discrimination is rather limited. Therefore, although TCN and majority population perceptions were all taken into account when ascertaining the situation of TCNs in Slovenia, instances of discrimination or unfavourable treatment cited in the forthcoming pages were predominantly provided by TCNs.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY ON DISCRIMINATION AND UNFAVOURABLE TREATMENT

The experiences of interviewees about their inclusion into and adaptation to Slovenian society collected in this study are both positive and negative. Cases of plain discrimination⁴ and complaints about prejudice and stereotypes were exposed by some interviewees, especially in the field of the labour market, contacts with public administration and housing.

On the other hand, positive experiences of the Slovenian society's ability to manage diversity were also mentioned, although the interviewees made it clear that most instances were possible due to the personal initiative of the individual (civil servant, teacher, doctor, nurse) with whom they were in contact. This was most evident in the spheres of health care, education, and to a certain extent also public administration. However, the study showed that there is a complete lack of systemic solutions in the area of health care (Bofulin and Bešter 2010) designed to deal with the cultural and linguistic diversity associated with TCNs. Nevertheless, most problems in the area of health care are solved by members of the medical staff who use a language that TCNs understand (usually a version of Croatian or Serbian, or English), or by patients that provide translators, such as family members, friends, or employers.

A lack of systematic solutions is also evident in the area of schooling: since, for example, secondary education does not fall into the category of compulsory education, each secondary school can decide whether or not to accept a foreign pupil, whereas primary schools need to accept them and make the necessary arrangements to accommodate them (Medvešek and Bešter 2010: 211). While Slovenian teenagers are enrolled in the most desirable and exclusive secondary schools based on a predetermined selection process, TCNs do not engage in this kind of process and can be accepted in a school based on other criteria, such as the availability of spare places in classes (Medvešek and Bešter 2010: 212). If we assume that Slovenian children strive for the best and the most popular secondary schools and that such schools are the first to be fully enrolled, we can easily see how TCNs may face a limited choice of options when enrolling in secondary schools and may, therefore, face discrimination.

One important finding of the study was discrimination directed towards black people (in this paper referred to as racial discrimination), especially in the areas of housing and labour market. Black interviewees from Africa complained about racial discrimination and identified their skin colour as the disturbing element that led to instances of discrimination. These results show that despite the very limited number of black immigrants in Slovenia, racial discrimination is a *de facto* problem.

Such findings on discrimination directed towards black people also confirmed that TCNs cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group, but that different groups of TCNs face different dilemmas in all

⁴ Discrimination occurs when a person is treated unequally, and usually unfavourably, compared to another individual or group. To discriminate between two persons or two groups, therefore, means to differentiate between them, assigning different rights and duties, unless it can be demonstrated that there is an objective reason to justify such a differentiation. Discrimination on ethnic or racial grounds therefore occurs when an individual or group is treated less favourably than another group or individuals, due to their ethnic or racial origin.

five areas of their life under consideration in this paper. One question that naturally arose during the conducting of this study was why some interviewees or groups of interviewees, rather than others, had experienced and reported more cases of discrimination and other forms of different treatment due to prejudice and stereotypes. Another was why some interviewees reported severe cases of discrimination or even racism, while others did not have any complaints of the sort and reported mostly positive experiences in most areas of their life.

One partial answer to this question can be already provided by previous research on this topic. Theodor Adorno and his colleagues have, for example, pointed out that negative attitudes towards black people and Jews could be traced back to some personality traits of the offender (Adorno et al. 1950: 248–279). In the case of TCNs in Slovenia, some studies (Bešter 2007; Brezigar 2007) have inferred that there is a certain social stratification in terms of the likeability of ethnic groups in Slovenia, and Bosniaks, for example, are less easily integrated into Slovenian society than Croats (Komac ed. 2007). The group of TCNs included in this study is very diverse in terms of their education, occupation, state and continent of origin, fluency in the Slovenian language, mother tongue, appearance and colour of skin, cultural background and habits, etc. According to the results of this study, such a diversity among TCNs seems to be highly correlated with the diversity of experiences (positive and negative) that TCNs face. In other words, the personal characteristics of TCNs such as skin colour, place of origin or mother tongue seem to determine the kind of problems and challenges as well as positive experiences that they face while living in Slovenia.

In the course of this study, three main factors were identified that seem to have a key impact on the life of TCNs in Slovenia: race, neighbourhood and language. I will try now to clarify each one of them.

RACE

Previous studies on immigrants in Slovenia focused mainly on discrimination on the basis of ethnicity rather than on racial discrimination. Hence skin colour was never identified as a key factor leading to discrimination in previous studies on immigrants and TCNs in Slovenia. One of the main findings of this study is that *race* – conceptualised mainly as “different skin colour” – plays an extremely important role in the occurrence of prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination. Those interviewees that have black skin face stereotypes, as well as pervasive prejudice and discrimination in their contacts with public administration, in the labour market and also in housing, as shown by the following example:

Interviewee 16, Africa: /... / I remember when I asked for a work permit, I went to the office to ask for the permit. As soon as I entered the office, I said “Hello”. And the lady asked: “Did you come for the work permit?” I said, yes. She said, “Excuse me, but we do not issue work permits to asylum seekers.”

In this instance, a TCN from Africa describes his experience with an official in public administration who, because of the colour of his skin, erroneously classified him as an asylum seeker. The interviewee believes that this would not have happened had he been white rather than black. The stereotype which in this case the interviewee was confronted with is the result of an error in thinking, because it represents an association of personal characteristics and features (of the person who came to the office) with features of a group of people (black customers that come to the office are usually asylum seekers). Walter Lippman (1922) pointed out that stereotypes are unreliable because they depict another person or group of people partially, inappropriately and in a biased manner. His view is that stereotypes are a kind of thought framework that distorts people’s perception of reality. They therefore represent an obstacle for the individual to perceive another person or groups as they really are, as opposed to the stereotype of the person or group to which the individual belongs.

Similar experiences were reported by black interviewees when seeking housing facilities:

Interviewee 22, Africa: /.../ But it is hard [to find an apartment]. If you are an African, it is hard. Ok, this is my side of the story. I don't know, each African has its own experiences. My experience is that it is also a little difficult. Because if they see you, they close the door. They tell you that someone came beforehand, and that they will call you. And then it is over. You have the money and you are prepared to pay, so I don't know why /.../.

Interviewee 16, Africa: /.../ finding a flat is difficult. This is one of the things that reminds you of the diversity that you bring as an individual. To find a flat in Slovenia it's a little bit awkward. Why do I say that it's a little bit awkward? In most instances, somebody can call for you, let's say your girlfriend or maybe a friend that is Slovenian. And he calls for you and the person will say: "All right, come to see the flat at 5 pm". If you accept the price and everything, you will agree with the proposal. But when you get there, at 5 pm, this person automatically sees that the person who called is not really the person seeking housing. The person who is looking for the flat is African, black-skinned. The whole context changes. This person will tell you that there are other candidates who will come to see the apartment and that if they won't rent it, they will call you. They will start telling you all sorts of stories just to turn you down. You automatically know that if you were the person who called, Slovenian, the flat would be automatically yours. Things change when they see that you are different /.../ I had [several] such experiences. And a lot of my friends have had such experiences. We know about this, this happens on a daily basis.

In the case of housing, we can conclude that black interviewees do not have to expose themselves to stereotypes or prejudice only, but also to plain discrimination. Again, the main reason seems to be the impact that the colour of their skin has on the interlocutor, when he is still a stranger, not even an acquaintance.

Although the problem of race was most felt by black Africans, an interviewee from Asia also reported that the darker colour of his skin was creating problems for him in his working environment:

Interviewee 11, Asia: /.../ in the end it was really a problem. /.../ for them [the employers] it was important that everything was taken care of, that this and this has been done. But, let's say, the workers were not so happy. But this is normal. For them it was – who is this black man, and he is in charge of us /.../.

We can therefore conclude that although the number of people that live in Slovenia and have a different, darker pigment of the skin (and especially if they are black) is probably statistically minimal and irrelevant, TCNs experience considerable racial discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes that affect their lives in a substantial manner, and that this kind of discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes may be directly linked to the pigment of their skin, i.e. their race.

NEIGHBOURHOOD

A second factor that seems to have a substantial impact on the experiences of TCNs is the neighbourhood where they choose to live in Slovenia. Janja Žitnik (2006: 89) in her study on immigrants in Slovenia pointed out that the neighbourhood where immigrants live has a significant impact on their socio-economic status. However, while the interviewees in her study pointed out that living in immigrant neighbourhoods may be a burden for their future, TCNs interviewed in this study pointed to a different way in which the neighbourhood affects their life and integration into Slovenian society. In the present study the question that is most predictive of their experiences seems to be: Are people in this neighbourhood used to foreigners?

Some interviewees pointed out that ethnic diversity of the neighbourhood interacts importantly with how people in it will accept TCNs, and consequently, whether TCNs experience discrimination:

Interviewee 4, from a country in the territory of the former Yugoslavia: We have positive experiences, also because I came first to Bela Krajina. / ... /

Interviewee 3, from a country in the territory of the former Yugoslavia: People here are so open.

Interviewee 4, from a country in the territory of the former Yugoslavia: / ... / already in the past years they had a lot of mixed marriages, because it was just across the Kolpa [river]. They socialised a lot, already at that time they had a lot of contacts with Croats, everybody knew the language. Even the local dialect is a mixture of Slovenian and Croatian. So we did not have any problems with the language, people were much more open and they accepted us easily. Even now we are happy to go to Bela Krajina, because we are very well accepted. Unlike in other places, where they are less used to foreigners, [and] there were more problems with this.

As interviewee 4 explains, the ethnic heterogeneity of the neighbourhood is a contextual factor that determines how people in it will accept the TCN: in those neighbourhoods where immigrants or foreigners are already successfully integrated into society, TCNs are more easily integrated into the society and are accepted in a more positive way. These kinds of differences can be noted also at the institutional level: for example, if a TCN needs to solve a bureaucratic problem at an administrative unit where employees are not accustomed to dealing with TCNs, he or she may experience a less favourable treatment or obstacles, not necessarily due to the intended discrimination of the civil servant in question, but rather to her or his lack of familiarity with such cases, as shown by this example:

Interviewee 22, Africa: There they were all right. The problem is that they don't know, they have no experience with cases like me. I was there nearly half an hour and the employee was asking for advice on the phone... It's not like Ljubljana. In Ljubljana they deal with it quickly and have experience. There they don't. This year I applied for citizenship and I had to wait for five months, so they would change ... because they don't know. I understand this, because they don't have so many people like me. It's like this, but I understand.

Interviewee 6, Asia: At the municipal office for foreigners, for example, the employee did not know what to do with me. She had to make some enquiries, what procedure she should follow in my case, because they had no experience with /.../ before. I think that I was at that time the first one here /.../ at that time when we took care of the documents.

Also in the area of education, Medvešek and Bešter (2010: 210) reported that in urban places and in areas that have been traditionally more exposed to immigration, schools have more experience with immigrant children, whereas in rural places or schools immigrant children are a novelty. One of the interviewees even reported that, when trying to enrol her child in the local primary school, the child was rejected. Only after the school headmaster had been instructed by the Ministry of Education to accept the child was the problem solved. The Ministry of Education confirmed that the case was not an isolated one (Medvešek and Bešter 2010: 211), thus giving support to the hypothesis that at least institutional discrimination in the area of schooling is probably more present and pervasive in neighbourhoods that have less familiarity with immigrants.

Similarly, ethnic homogeneity of the neighbourhood in Slovenia seems to be most problematic for those TCNs that differ mostly from the majority population of the neighbourhood where they live – and skin colour is among those most visible means of differentiation from the majority population, as an interviewee explains:

Interviewee 7, Africa: Being African in a society of white-skinned people does not work very well, since occasionally there arise instances of racism. Let's say someone talks about you as a "black man" and that you "steal their jobs." Personally, it doesn't bother me too much, because I have my goal that is more important to me. / ... / There should be freedom of speech and so it is also in my workplace. I think that almost all my colleagues are immigrants from the Balkan countries. They do not understand English, so I am forced to speak mainly Slovenian.

This example suggests a tentative explanation of why the black people included in the study seem to experience more instances of discrimination compared to other interviewees. They seem to be worse off in two respects: firstly, because their colour of the skin makes their difference from the majority population more noticeable, and secondly, because the small numbers of blacks in Slovenia renders it impossible for them to find a neighbourhood where people are accustomed to such kind of diversity. It is in fact much easier to find a landlord or an employer who has rented a flat to or employed a TCN from Kosovo than a landlord or employer that has rented a flat to or employed a black from Africa.

LANGUAGE

Language was reported to be a challenge and obstacle to integration into Slovenian society by several interviewees, in almost all spheres of their life that were under scrutiny in this study. Therefore, it seems that language could be rightly identified as the third factor that has a substantial impact on the experiences of TCNs in Slovenia. This should not come as a surprise, since language is a constitutive element of ethnic and national identity. The Slovenian national identity is based on several constituting elements, such as a common culture, common history and a defined settlement area. Nevertheless, language plays a particular role in the constitution of the Slovenian national identity. It is a landmark that defines the essence of being “Slovene”; it is a means of transmission of culture and identity through generations, as well as the means of communication of members of the Slovenian society. It is therefore not surprising that mastering the Slovenian language is very important for the integration of TCNs into Slovenian society.

Interviewees reported a number of difficulties associated with language in obtaining employment. One interviewee, for example, noted that the Employment Service of Slovenia does not keep records of the number of immigrants that cannot find jobs or work in the labour market because of their lack of proficiency of the Slovene language. Some interviewees reported that they could not find a job because of their poor linguistic skills, as the following example shows:

Interviewee 7, Africa: Well, every country has its own system for how to find a job. Firstly, I got the permit (work permit, author’s note) /.../. When I had obtained my permit, I registered at the Employment Service of Slovenia, where they were looking for a job for me, but they did not find one. The problem was that no one wants to employ you if you do not speak Slovene. The fact that I could not find a job because of the language seemed to be a big problem. The Employment Service enrolled me in a course in Slovene, and I finished that course. This was at the Faculty of Arts. At first I was enrolled in “Eurošola” for three months, and then it was another school in Bežigrad, where I took lessons for some time. I finished that course and passed the exam in proficiency in the Slovenian language for foreigners at the Faculty of Arts. Afterwards, I found a job.

In the area of housing, interviewees report that they had to ask their friends or girlfriends to call on their behalf and to make appointments to visit apartments that were being rented (Pirc 2010: 188).

In the area of education, linguistic skills are of paramount importance, since they impact the academic results of children in a significant way. A series of provisions have been adopted to help immigrant children to learn the Slovenian language. Such provisions range from simple “special attention” that educators in kindergartens should pay to immigrant children so they may learn the official state language, to additional lessons in the Slovenian language in primary schools that are especially tailored for immigrants (*Strategija vključevanja otrok, učencev in dijakov migrantov v sistem vzgoje in izobraževanja v Republiki Sloveniji* 2007: 4–20). However, even in the case of primary schools, teachers complain about the inadequacy of teaching materials (Bešter and Medvešek 2010: 221) for teaching Slovenian as a second language. Moreover, training for teachers in didactical skills that are needed to teach Slovenian as a second language has not been approached systematically (Bešter and Medvešek 2010: 217).

In the area of health care, language is always an issue. It seems that with patients who are able to speak English or some form of Serbian or Croatian or even a Slavic language, only minor problems arise, since the medical staff is able to adapt to these languages and in one way or another communicate successfully with the patients:

Interviewee 21, Asia: At the doctor's everybody speaks English /.../ but I am really surprised that they all speak English so well, in order to communicate /.../ So there are no problems.

Gynaecologist: For example, I have patients, let's say from Ukraine or Russia. They do not come with partners [to translate], because this is a Slavic language and we understand each other. And also they already know some basic Slovene. [There are] also some from the Czech Republic.

However, problems arise when the patient speaks only one other language, such as Chinese or Albanian, and the medical staff is unable to adapt to it. In these cases the patient needs to provide a translator (a friend, co-worker, boss, family member), since medical facilities are unable to adapt and no solutions are provided on a systemic level for such cases (Bofulin and Bešter 2010: 286). Despite the fact that the Act on Patients' Rights states that the patient has the right to be informed of his medical condition, treatment options, etc. (*ibid*), the consent forms signed by TCNs are universally in Slovene, although the medical staff explains what is written to the patient in a language that the patient understands (*ibid*). However, TCNs do not always understand what they are being told, and sometimes they do not show that they do not understand. In such cases, the "good will" practices that rely on the good will of doctors and patients rather than on systematic solutions may not be an adequate solution in diagnosing and healing processes:

Interviewee 18, Australia: /.../ and the doctor was speaking in Slovenian and I was still trying to speak Slovenian. And the Doctor told me everything in Slovenian and only now and then something in English. He spoke words in Slovenian and more words in Slovenian, then he said it English "Well, it is gonna hurt." ... Basically the communication was good, I decided to speak Slovenian with some patients, and if I didn't understand everything, it was probably my fault. Sometimes I said I didn't understand and if he could tell me in English /.../.

Interviewee 1, country from the area of former Yugoslavia: The attitude of doctors is good. There are no differences. I didn't have any problems, even if I didn't know [the language], frequently I didn't understand. I did not have health problems, I do not like to visit doctors.

Moreover, the similarity of the language spoken by TCNs to the Slovenian language is not always a positive factor that reduces the linguistic barrier between the TCN and his interlocutor, as shown by several examples in the sphere of health care. The opinion of an interviewee from Asia on the difficulties in communicating with public services is illustrative. When asked if she had faced any problems with the language she replied:

Interviewee 2, Asia: I had no problems. Bosnians who do not speak English have problems.

This statement confirms the findings of previous studies (Roter 2007; Brezigar 2007; Medvešek 2007; Žitnik 2006: 92) on the fact that immigrants in Slovenia are a heterogeneous group and that certain ethnic groups (and languages) are more welcome, while others have extremely low status among the Slovenian population.

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The experiences of interviewees about their inclusion into and adaptation to Slovenian society collected in this study are both positive and negative. Cases of prejudice, stereotypes or discrimination were detected and blacks were identified as a subgroup of TCNs that faces particularly severe obstacles to integration into Slovenian society. Their experiences were particularly negative in the area of housing and the labour market, followed by contacts with public administration. Since most interviewees were relatively young (with no particular health issues) and had no children in primary or secondary schools, it would be premature to conclude that black TCNs in Slovenia do not face particular obstacles in the areas of schooling or health care. Further studies are therefore needed to explore the situation of black TCNs in education.

The practice of secondary schools that can decide on their own whether to accept a foreign pupil or not is highly questionable. Although secondary schools do not fall into the category of compulsory education, they are still state institutions, funded by the public, and not privately owned (and financed) facilities. They represent an important medium of integration for foreign teenagers and as such have an important role as state institutions. Systematic arrangements should be made in order to simplify the inclusion of foreign pupils in schooling at the secondary level and to overcome bureaucratic procedures that favour their segregation to the least popular schools and programs in the country.

Among the positive experiences exposed by interviewees were contacts with personnel in the health care system who are prepared to adapt to the needs of the patients. However, when such adaptation is not possible, because, for example, doctors or nurses are not able to speak the TCN's mother tongue, the whole burden of solving the problem rests with the patient, creating opportunities for misdiagnosis and mistreatment. Although no such cases were detected during this study, the issue should not be neglected, because some interviewees confessed to not having fully understood their doctors. Therefore, the patient should be offered the assistance of a proficient translator in all instances when his or her health may be compromised as a result of a misunderstanding *vis-à-vis* the doctor. Moreover, health care facilities that are most frequently used by TCNs should consider translating at least some of the forms that patients need to sign prior treatment or surgery in at least a few of the most frequent languages among TCNs. The same approach could be adopted for recommendations given to patients for some of the most common diseases. If these recommendations were written and translated, doctors and nurses would even save the time they usually spend trying to communicate with patients, and could devote such time to the following-up of patients' treatment, rendering health care more efficient and TCN-friendly.

Skin colour, proficiency in the Slovenian language and the openness of the neighbourhood towards ethnic or racial diversity have been identified as the three factors that best explain the extent and type of problems and challenges (prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination) faced by TCNs in this study.

Finally, although the study combines two audiences providing not only the perceptions of TCNs, but also the perceptions of individuals that work with TCNs, in two of the five areas under study, the perceptions of the majority population have not been completely included. In the area of housing no landlords were included in this study, while in the area of labour market no employers were interviewed. Although the reticence of employers towards participating in such studies is well known to researchers in the field, a study on the housing of TCNs that also included the perceptions of landlords would provide further data on their situation in this area and the challenges they face. In this area, one of the issues that could be explored is whether TCNs face discrimination due to systemic failures of the rule of law. In other words, it is possible that apartment owners are particularly inclined to discriminate against TCNs (and other groups of possible tenants) because their options in case of problems with tenants are severely limited and they are not willing to take any risks.

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POVZETEK

ALI SE DRŽAVLJANI TRETJIH DRŽAV V SLOVENIJI SOOČAJO S PREDSDOKI IN DISKRIMINACIJO?

Sara BREZIGAR

Članek ponuja vpogled v rezultate študije o integraciji državljanov tretjih držav (DTD), ki živijo v Sloveniji. Študijo so izvajali raziskovalci Inštituta za narodnostna vprašanja v letih 2008 in 2009 in je temeljila na 21 poglobljenih intervjujih z DTD in na izvedbi fokusnih skupin z večinskim prebivalstvom (40 intervjuvancev).

Namen prispevka ni celovito prikazati izsledke študije, temveč se osredotočiti le na en segment rezultatov – na ugotavljanje obstoja etnične in rasne diskriminacije DTD v Sloveniji. Prispevek ponuja odgovor na vprašanje, ali državljani tretjih držav doživljajo diskriminacijo na petih področjih svojega življenja – na področju šolstva, zaposlovanja in trga dela, zdravstva, v stikih z javno upravo ter pri urejanju stanovanjskega vprašanja.

Rezultati raziskave so pokazali zelo raznoliko sliko Slovenije. Nekateri DTD se soočajo s hudimi predsodki, stereotipi in diskriminacijo, drugi pa imajo v Sloveniji pretežno pozitivne izkušnje. Skozi analizo rezultatov raziskave je bilo mogoče izpostaviti tri dejavnike, ki pomembno vplivajo na to, ali bo imel posamezni DTD pozitivne izkušnje na petih navedenih področjih življenja ali pa se bo v večji meri soočal s stereotipi, predsodki in diskriminacijo. Dejavniki, ki torej na osnovi izsledkov te raziskave vplivajo na izkušnje DTD v Sloveniji, so: rasa, okolje in jezik.

Raziskava je pokazala, da se temnopolti državljani – torej tisti, ki se od večinskega prebivalstva že na prvi pogled najbolj razlikujejo po rasnem poreklu – v največji meri soočajo z drugačnim in neugodnim ravnanjem večinskega prebivalstva ter z diskriminacijo. Takšne izkušnje imajo predvsem pri reševanju stanovanjskega vprašanja in pri zaposlovanju. Zaradi majhnega števila temnopolnih DTD v Sloveniji, se le-ti niso pojavljali kot podskupina v predhodno opravljenih raziskavah na področju integracije in diskriminacije DTD. Izvedena raziskava pa navaja na razmišljanje, da se temnopolti DTD prav zaradi svoje drugačne polti soočajo z manj ugodnim ravnanjem in s specifičnimi težavami, s katerimi se drugi DTD sploh ne srečujejo ali pa se srečujejo redkeje.

Okolje je drugi dejavnik, ki močno vpliva na izkušnje DTD. Gre namreč za vprašanje, ali posamezni DTD v Sloveniji živi v okolju, kjer ima večinsko prebivalstvo že (pozitivne) izkušnje z DTD ali pa je v danem slovenskem okolju tak posameznik velika izjema. Izsledki raziskave so pokazali, da je integraci-

ja DTD manj problematična, če je okolje, v katerem živi DTD, bolj raznoliko in če imajo v tem okolju prebivalci, uslužbenci, državni uradniki in druge ciljne skupine že izkušnje z DTD. V takšnem raznolikem okolju so DTD sprejeti bolj pozitivno, se soočajo z manj birokratskih ovir, doživljajo manj diskriminacije in neugodnega ravnanja.

Jezik je tretji dejavnik, ki močno vpliva na izkušnje DTD. Načeloma imajo DTD, ki govorijo angleško ali vsaj jezik, ki je slovenščini zelo podoben, manj težav kot drugi DTD. Lažje najdejo zaposlitev in lažje komunicirajo z zdravstvenim osebjem in javno upravo. DTD vsekakor ugotavljajo, da je poznavanje slovenskega jezika izjemno pomemben dejavnik pri uspešni integraciji v ta prostor.