When Ć becomes Č: discrimination of unrecognized national minorities in Slovenia

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The paper discusses the situation of members of "new" national communities in Slovenia, focusing particularly on their experience regarding discrimination in the spheres of education, work, social and political participation, access to the media and everyday life. The discrimination they face in everyday life is often rooted deep within the institutional structure as the constitution of Slovenia has no particular provisions protecting the (collective) rights of these communities. The analyses of various research reports and databases, substantiated with transcripts from selected interviews with members of different minority (cultural) associations, provide an insight into the sorts, the extent, the circumstances and the consequences of the social, civil and political discrimination based on national or ethnic appurtenance. In the concluding part, the author argues that prejudices and stereotypes, which support the discriminative attitude towards the minority communities, are more than merely oversimplified judgements arising from narrow-sightedness or limited knowledge – above all, they are political measures, ideological tales, which are the crucial driving force of existing societies. The ethnic discrimination – whether insulting remarks or the perfidious violence of ignorance – which is based on the alibi of prejudices is therefore never "an event", but rather a process nested within the relations of power.

Keywords: *MINORITIES, ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION, SOCIAL DISTANCE, SLOVENIA*

1. INTRODUCTION

"I have always had a problem with this differentiation between Slovenians and Non-Slovenians. Non-Slovenians are not English or Hungarians; they are always 'the ones from the south'." (Velimir Bijelić, the Society of Slovenian-Montenegrin friendship)

Slovenia is characterized by its multiethnic social environment where one nation (the Slovenians) is markedly prevalent.[1] The number of ethnic minorities, their extent and real economical and political power varied through different historical periods with respect to changes of state borders and the sovereignty over this area (Komac, 2005). After Slovenia's independence in 1991, there are members of several non-Slovenian ethnic communities living within the boundaries of the state. These communities can roughly be divided into two groups:

– Historical national minorities (autochthonous[2] national communities as defined by the Slovenian constitution), including the Italian, the Hungarian and the Roma community;

[1] According to the 2002 census the proportion of population declaring themselves as Slovenians is 83.1 %.

[2] The Slovenian Constitution does not specifically define the term "autochthonous"; in the context of ethnic minorities the term is used when referring to an ethnic community, which has occupied a certain

– The so-called "new" national communities, members of which belong to the nations of the former common state of Yugoslavia. Most of them immigrated to Slovenia during the sixties and the seventies of the 20th century as economic migrants.[3]

The assurance and protection of rights of (national and ethnic) minorities in Slovenia can be categorized into three spheres:

1. The relatively integral legislative protection of historical or autochthonous minorities (Italian and Hungarian), including constitutional provisions (11th and 64th article of the Constitution) and about 80 laws and regulations, concerning various aspects of everyday life of minorities;
2. The 65th article of the Constitution, which establishes that the special rights of the Roma community in Slovenia are regulated by a special law[4];
3. Members of national communities from the former common state of Yugoslavia do not possess a collective social status in Slovenia. The Slovenian Constitution does not include particular regulations regarding the protection of their (collective) rights and their minority communities. When preserving their national identity, the "new" national communities are only supported by the 61st and 62nd article of the constitution determining the right to express their national appurtenance and the right to use their language and writing.

The differentiation between individuals or social groups is based on their position in the social structure, which is set in accordance to the (rare) material goods or skills and knowledge they possess and to their possibilities of changing their social status. Usually, the determining factors, influencing the status of a certain group within the social structure, are the values and the attitudes of the majority society towards this group, its socio-economic position (level of education, employment ...) and access to cultural, social and political resources. Members of national or ethnic minorities are underprivileged in certain social spheres, achieve inferior status within the social structure, and are therefore more socially vulnerable and more susceptible to social exclusion.

Research (Kržišnik-Bukić, 2003, Komac, 2007, Zavratnik, Kralj 2008) reveals that the attitude of the majority population towards the immigration of foreigners into Slovenia is generally dismissive, particularly so in the case of immigrants from the other

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geographical area "from old" (Eriksen, 1993). However, due to numerous difficulties and dubious explanations (the definition of "autochthonous", for instance, is largely arbitrary) the term is criticized by several authors. For further explanation see Klinar, Peter (1986), Kržišnik-Bukić, Vera (2003), Komac, Miran (2005). Due to its arbitrary and manipulative nature the term "autochthonous" is no longer used in EU's documents in regard to national and ethnic minorities. In this sense, Slovenia is a discernible exception.

[3] When using the term "new" national communities we are referring to the definition of Miran Komac (2003, 2007), though it has to be noted that this terminology too is perhaps a relic of the past rather than an adequate expression of the present times. The members of nations and nationalities of the former Yugoslavia have lived in Slovenia for several generations, so the use of the term "new" national communities is disputable. As noted by Medica (2004:98): "the current terminology is diverse, inaccurate and often degrading in everyday life ... and thus – by all means and among other things – rather manipulative because of its poor determination".

[4] The law regulating the rights of the Roma community was passed through the parliament as late as 2007 and only after a long-lasting debate.

republics of the former Yugoslavia, who, in fact, represent the major proportion of the immigrant population in Slovenia. A similar picture is revealed by the analysis of Slovenian public opinion poll results, measuring since 1992, among other things, the social distance. Immigrants and foreign workers were listed under the question "Which of the following groups of people you wouldn't want to have as your neighbours?" The proportion of answers marking immigrants or foreign workers as unwanted neighbours has fluctuated over the years and was highest in the period after the declaration of independence, when people from Bosnia and Herzegovina were seeking refuge in Slovenia. According to the most recent available data, almost one fifth of the population, taking part in a survey, said they would not want to have immigrants for neighbours.

Table 1: I would not like to have immigrant neighbours

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2005
I would not like to have immigrant neighbours, in %	39.6	55.6	40.5	18.1	28.3	16.0	28.5	20.6	22.6	17.6

Source: Toš, Niko et al. (2002): Slovensko javno mnenje. Sumarnik raziskav. Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za družbene vede. Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov and Slovensko javno mnenje 2005/3+4: Svetovna raziskava vrednot, Stališča o reformah. Documented in: http://www.adp.fdv.uni-lj.si/opisi/sjm053/ (15. 12. 2008)

Social distance towards people of different ethnic origin can also be perceived in the results of the Slovenian public opinion poll in the year 2002 (SPO 2002/02). More than a third (34,2 %) of people participating in the survey stated that they would like to live in an area where hardly anyone is of different ethnic origin than the majority population of Slovenia.

This paper discusses the situation of members of "new" national communities in Slovenia, focusing particularly on their experience regarding discrimination in the spheres of education, work, social and political participation, access to the media and everyday life. We are arguing that discrimination, encountered by members of the "new" national communities in Slovenia is often rooted in the lack of systemic regulation of their status as a minority. To gain maximum insight into the sort, the extent, the circumstances and the consequences of the social, civil and political discrimination based on national or ethnic appurtenance we have decided to perform semi-structured interviews with members of associations[5], who are more active in representing the interests of minority communities and appear in the media.[6]

[5] The interviewees are: Hasan Bačić (The Cultural Union of Bosniacs in Slovenia), Živko Banjac, (The Society of the Serbian Community), Velimir Bijelić (The *Society of Slovenian*-Montenegrin *friendship*), Ivo Garić (The Union of Croatian Societies in Slovenia), Tahir Maliqaj, (The Union of Albanian Cultural Societies in Slovenia), Branko Matijević (The Association of Unions of Cultural Societies of the Constitutive Nations and Nationalities of the Former Yugoslavia in Slovenia), Vesna Miletić (The Society of the Serbian Community) and Naum Taštanoski (The Macedonian Cultural Society Macedonia, Ljubljana).

[6] The article was written on the basis of findings of research in the scope of the target-oriented research project "Consequences of Discrimination on Social and Political Inclusion of Youth In Slovenia",

2. EDUCATION

The analysis of educational structure of individual ethnic groups reveals significant differences among them. Among the members of the majority population (Slovenians), the predominant level of education is secondary school graduate (54, 3%). The situation is similar among the Croats (50.8 %), Montenegrins (52.6 %), Macedonians (47.7 %) and Serbs (51.5 %) living in Slovenia.

Among the Albanians, Bosniacs, Bosnians or Muslims[7], the prevailing categories are "no education", "incomplete primary school" and "primary school". 7.1 % of Slovenians completed higher education and the situation is similar among Montenegrins (10 %), Croats (5.9 %), Macedonians (6.6 %) and Serbs (4.8 %). The percentage of people with completed higher education is much lower among Albanians (1.7 %), Bosnians (1.3 %), Bosniacs (1.3 %) and Muslims (0.5 %) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, Census 2002). In Slovenia, which is (at least at the declarative level) oriented towards becoming a "knowledge society" this segment of the population is particularly socially vulnerable. Vera Kržišnik-Bukić shares this view: "In this case particular populations are threatened by the 'Roma syndrome', where a community is recognized as a social problem rather than a cultural phenomenon" (2003:103).

In the sphere of education, the question of (additional) classes of mother tongue and culture is of particular interest. The Slovenian legislation regulates the protection of national minorities. The right to use their own language in upbringing and education is assured exclusively for members of the Italian and the Hungarian national minority, while members of other ethnic communities can only rely on eventual bilateral agreements and international conventions[8] and above all, on the self-organization and self-funding of such additional classes. The representative of the Albanian national community emphasised the following problems:

> *"Additional classes of Albanian language for instance. The government approves, of course, providing that the assembled group of children is large enough... However, we cannot pay the teacher! We do have a teacher, but look, she also has a family to support. The Ministry of Education, they paid 150 euros to our teacher ... That does not even cover travelling expenses. So teachers feel uninspired, they*

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[7] The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia differentiates among the following terms: Bosniacs (declaration for a Bosniak as a nation was enforced by the Constitution of the federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1994 and was thus used for the first time in the 2002 population census), Bosnians (in previous censuses people who said they are Bosnians included in the item regionally declared) and Muslims (including persons who declare themselves as Muslims in the sense of ethnic and not religious affiliation).

[8] According to the 8th article of the Elementary School Act (Official Gazette, no. 12/96, 33/97 in 59/01) and on the basis of international treaties and bilateral agreements, the children, belonging to the Albanian, Croatian or Macedonian community, who are included in the Slovene elementary school programmes, have the opportunity to have additional lessons of their mother tongue and culture organized for them.

are not motivated and find no satisfaction in teaching." (Tahir Maliqaj, the Union of Albanian Cultural Societies in Slovenia)

The representative of the Croatian community pointed out similar problems:

"The Slovenian authorities considered our suggestion and sent to the Ministry of Education a list of particular schools which were instructed to host our teachers on a certain day of the week. The Slovenian state only provides the place in some primary schools... and our teacher travels from Maribor through Ljubljana to Piran. The Republic of Croatia finances the teacher's salary, books, teaching materials and travel expenses. ...We say: adopt some new laws and include the Croatian language among other optional subjects in schools ... and we will see to it, that Croatian children will inscribe, but Slovenian children will also be able to inscribe and this is something completely different." (Ivo Garić, the Union of Croatian Societies in Slovenia).

However, even within the Croatian community, there are certain reservations regarding the organization of an additional subject in selected schools.

"Some schools have been instructed to offer us room for the organization of classes. ... In a way, to us, this resembles getoization. If you appoint the school and then let us, the national community, organize additional classes, then only our children will come. We would like to have Slovenian children or anyone else who would like so, to be able to join in as well. And then what happens – the parents are afraid that their children will be labelled, marked, and that is why instead of one hundred, twenty kids turn up and results are modest." (Ivo Garić, the Union of Croatian Societies in Slovenia).

Other national communities, whose countries have no bilateral agreements with Slovenia, usually find themselves being dismissed, as there is no legal basis to support the organization of additional classes in their language.

"Five or six years ago we demanded the organization of additional classes of our mother tongue in primary schools and when we visited the Basic Education Directorate ... well, there the conversation ran on and on and this was the result: there is no legal basis... We would agree, for instance, to a Serbian or a Croatian teacher being appointed in Koper or in Jesenice. And lessons should be open to all, finally, why shouldn't other children join the classes if they wanted to?" (Hasan Bačić, the Cultural Union of Bosniacs in Slovenia)

3. EMPLOYMENT

Employment is the basis of economic safety and independence and is considered one of the most important factors of integration. At first, many immigrants accept work in less attractive sectors of the labour market or where supply exceeds demand. One reason for this is the fact that they usually do not have sufficient qualifications or their qualifications are not acknowledged in the new environment. Almost one-

half of the members of individual ethnic communities are employed as non-industrial workers. Among the industrial workers, most common occupations are operators of machines and instruments and industry manufacturers. According to their national appurtenance, the following proportions of the population (inhabitants of Slovenia over 15 years old) are employed in the above mentioned occupational areas: Slovenians – 34 %, Albanians – 55 %, Bosnians – 67 %, Croats – 48 %, Montenegrins – 43 %, Macedonians – 52 %, Muslims – 71 % and Serbs 57 %. (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, Census 2002). This proportion is somewhat higher among the Albanians, Bosnians, Bosniacs and Muslims, as can be expected, when considering their educational structure.

Due to different structural obstacles and overt or covert discrimination, the immigrants (and their descendants) often exceed the average proportion among the unemployed. Commonly, they remain trapped in a situation, where the employment they get does not correspond to their education or capacities, but they have no chance of promotion. The 2002 census reveals that the proportion of unemployed persons among the "new" national communities is somewhat higher than among the Slovenians. The proportion is highest among Albanians (20,2 %), Bosniacs (16,3 %), Bosnians (17,3 %) and Muslims (18,3 %). Vera Kržišnik-Bukić establishes: "The high proportion of the unemployed among the categories Bosniacs, Muslims and Bosnians, which is partly a consequence of the unadvantageous educational structure of these populations, can be perceived as a national problem – the problem of discrimination of a particular population (mostly from Bosnia), with a strictly determined set of characteristics – most of them practice Islam as their religion" (2003:104)[9].

The 2002 census database shows that the proportion of the unemployed is markedly higher among the second generation of immigrants. This is characteristic of all ethnic groups and is most probably due to first generation of immigrants finding work more easily as they immigrated to Slovenia in the sixties and the seventies of the past century, when rapid industrialization created great demand for workforce. "Their descendants are facing an entirely different situation – today, young people in general, particularly the ones who are searching for their first employment, experience a lot of difficulties. Apart from this they often encounter ethnic discrimination when competing with their 'autochthonous' Slovenian colleagues" (Bešter, in Komac (ed.), 2007:224).

Most of the people we spoke to believe that discrimination based on ethnic appurtenance do occur when they are searching for work and during their employment; however, it is something one does not speak about in public. Law forbids discrimination, based on ethnic appurtenance, so it is usually covert:

> *"It is all hidden well. Access to work is limited, candidates, belonging to the domicile nation are quietly favoured, regardless of their qualifications. It is normal for the member of the majority nation to get the job. Tell me a single name of a parliament member, who belongs to any of these nations." (Naum Taštanoski, the Macedonian Cultural Society Macedonia, Ljubljana)*

[9] For more on discrimination of Muslims in Slovenia, see Bajt, Veronika (in this volume).

"Look, work represents at least 70 or 80 percent of our lives; if it is so important and if we cannot be promoted with respect to our qualities, knowledge and experience, this is surely a major obstacle. If two candidates for a single job are equal, the Slovenian will be chosen, because he is Slovenian..." (Branko Matijević, the Association of Unions of Cultural Societies of the Constitutive Nations and Nationalities of the Former Yugoslavia in Slovenia)

"In Slovenia, the present criterion is not how much you know. ... Slovenia is not the promised land." (Hasan Bačić, the Cultural Union of Bosniacs in Slovenia)

In the sphere of work related discrimination, the phenomena of the "sticky floor" and the "glass ceiling" are considered particularly problematic. They illustrate the limited capacity of promotion, the standstill at a certain position reached within the hierarchical arrangement. The members of the majority nationality occupy most of the work posts in legislative, judicial and executive power; they also dominate among the functionaries and are managers of most companies (Kržišnik-Bukić, 2003). The interviewed member of the Montenegrin community pointed out the problem of access to leading positions:

"I think that people, whose last names end with –ić, have to deal with some sort of a glass ceiling, a restriction of their ascent". (Velimir Bijelić, the Society of Slovenian-Montenegrian friendship)

The data, presented by the member of the Serbian community are even more concrete:

"Look at this organigram; it is publicly accessible on the internet. This is the list of names of all people working in the Slovenian government's agencies and services. 417 names are listed, only seven among them suggest non-Slovenian ethnic background. Seven!" (Vesna Miletić, the Society of the Serbian Community)

4. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Members of the "new" national communities in Slovenia have only limited resources available for the preservation and promotion of their language and culture. Their most important milieu is the wider family circle and (to a lesser extent) the various (cultural) societies they establish. The resources of these societies originate mostly from donations, except in some particular instances, which are partially funded by the Ministry of Culture, the Public Fund for Cultural Activities and individual local municipalities.

"As our status is not regulated, we do not have the resources, available to the national communities, acknowledged as national minorities. So we are obliged to take part in public competitions and projects, to receive funding from the Ministry of Culture ... altogether, we gather between 15,000 and 20,000 euros a year, which represent 10 % of our budget. This means that 90 % is collected within the community, through sponsors, our entrepreneurs. In this respect, the Croatian community is closely linked and integrated." (Ivo Garić, the Union of Croatian Societies in Slovenia)

The basic problem of the members of the nations and nationalities of the former Yugoslavia living in Slovenia is – as previously mentioned – that they are not acknowledged by the Slovenian Constitution as a legal group entity, as a minority, so they have no legal background to support the cultural and lingual expression of their national particularities. That is why in 2003 at the Round Table of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) the representatives of Albanians, Bosniacs, Montenegrins, Croats, Macedonians and Serbs in Slovenia, organized within The Association of Unions of Cultural Societies of the Constitutive Nations and Nationalities of the Former Yugoslavia in Slovenia, have presented a public appeal to the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia to "initiate and perform the procedure and change the Constitution of Slovenia so as to include us, the Albanians, Bosniacs, Montenegrins and Serbs living in Slovenia and to declare our status as national communities/national minorities living in the Republic of Slovenia."[10]

During the continuation of the public appeal it was pointed out that members of nations from the former Yugoslavia represent a considerable proportion of the inhabitants of Slovenia, that they have lived in Slovenia for a long time, that they are concentrated in larger cities, industrial and mining centres, that they are loyal citizens, that they want to preserve their national identity and that they do not want to be assimilated.[11] The public appeal did not receive any response in the National Assembly; no suggestions it contained were realized or even taken into consideration.

> *"Regarding the acknowledgement of the former Yugoslav nations as minorities... I have to say that we have worked for three or four years when that meeting of ECRI occurred in Ljubljana and we made our appeal, but nothing happened at all. I think that in the policy of Slovenia it is not even clear who has the right to be recognized as a national minority; during discussions we would always hear 'not autochthonous'. It is very easy to say 'not autochthonous' and consider the matter settled. The European documents and resolutions no longer use the term autochthonous. Three things are crucial: whether you are organized, whether you want the status of a special community, and whether you are sufficiently representative in number, which is not defined though. ... We are organized, rather numerous and, of course, the will is there. But there are also other elements such as cultural diversity, lingual diversity, a desire to preserve original identity etc. In addition, if you look at these things, surely, there is ground for acknowledging these national minorities and that is why the Association of Unions was established. The only thing, written down in our statute, the only project we are engaged in, is the acknowledgement of national minorities; everything else is done within individual Unions – the preservation of national identity, language, culture..." (Ivo Garić, the Union of Croatian Societies in Slovenia).*

[10] The public appeal was presented at the round table organised by Council of Europe – European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. Ljubljana, October l4th, 2003, page 1.

[11] Public appeal of Albanians, Bosniacs, Montenegrins, Croats, Macedonians and Serbs, living in Slovenia, page 2, points 4 – 8.

The core problem of the organizations of the "new" national communities is finding legitimate people from government agencies to talk to when trying to regulate their status as a minority.

> *"We have paid visits to all political parties, several times. The people we talked to, they all tried hard to listen and to understand our point of view. No one ever said that what we want is not legitimate, but no one ever said there is a chance it could be done, either. It is very simple. On the declarative level everything is fine, but it always remains purely declarative." (Hasan Bačić, the Cultural Union of Bosniacs in Slovenia)*

The Governmental Office for National Minorities seems like the most suitable contact, as this institution has been performing the role of a mediator between the state and the members of acknowledged national minorities. The results of the research project Perceptions of Slovenian Integration Policies indicate, that most people (71 %) believe, that the Office for National Minorities should also represent the interests of non-acknowledged national minorities.

> *"We have had some discussions with the Office for National Minorities. ... They did not approach us in a sense, like, 'We are the experts in this field', or 'We understand what you are talking about' or 'We will take some steps'. No, that was not the case! In fact, it was the case of 'What do you want?' or 'There is nothing we can do' or 'There is no legislation'. Well, this was precisely our point! There really is no legislation, but we would like to change it, so we could arrange our affairs more easily." (Ivo Garić, the Union of Croatian Societies in Slovenia).*

According to research results and interviews, the members of the "new" national communities expressed a strong will to preserve their peculiarities or ethnic identity, which is particularly obvious in the field of language and culture. As they do not have a special legal status, which would grant them special rights as a minority, they feel that they are not citizens "fully", that they are facing various factors, which hinder their full participation in the processes of decision-making and other forms of participation in public life, particularly in the sphere of cultural policy and education. Therefore, it is possible to assume, that these communities experience their position as politically marginalized. This leads to their organized action, the attempts to gain political acknowledgement.

5. PRESENCE IN THE MEDIA AND ACCESS TO MEDIA CONTENT

According to several authors (Kuzmanić, 1999, Makarovič and Rončević, 2006, Petković, 2006 and Komac, 2007) the core problem of media representation of the "new" national minorities is the fact that this is a marginalised topic. These issues are either "quietly overlooked" or depicted in a negative way. The Slovenian media write about national minorities mostly when they are engaged in a certain conflict. If a certain group is most often referred to in the context of conflicts and political tension, the "public image of a trouble-maker" can become associated with it, even if the

group is not specifically presented as the cause of problems (Makarovič and Rončević, 2006:49). Analysis of articles published in the Slovenian media shows that members of national minorities are usually present in the media in one of the two diametrically opposed ways: *either as victims* (described in terms of discrimination, marginalization, segregation, deprivation of minority rights due to intentional measures (or lack of measures) on the part of Slovenian institutions and/or the Slovenian population or other structural reasons) or *as the cause of problems* for the rest of the Slovenian population, which implies the reversed situation, where the majority population is portrayed as a victim of the minority (Makarovič and Rončević, 2006:49).

The information regarding the Croatian, Albanian, Serbian, Bosniak, Muslim, Montenegrin and Macedonian ethnic communities in the Slovenian media is very scarce and consequently "the exclusion from the media is causing a sense of exclusion from society and the sentiment of their social marginalization, perhaps even getoization" (Komac, 2007:378). The media exclusion was confirmed also by out informants:

> *"The worst thing concerning the situation of these national communities is the absence from the media. This is totally blocked, it is virtually impossible to reach the media." (Ivo Garić, the Union of Croatian Societies in Slovenia).*

Due to the lack of interest on the part of journalists and the absence of this topic in the media, they have also tried to make their way into the media with their own contributions, but without any significant accomplishments:

> *"We have tried in different ways to write articles and so on, but if we wrote, say, twenty, two were published ... These were very professional articles, but still they were not published. I think that the Slovenian public is simply not prepared to discuss these topics ... the majority nation is not educated in this way, the awareness needs to be raised about this being necessary, that there are certain rights and that this topic is not a taboo, but rather a legitimate and legal demand and until this happens within the majority nationality, I believe, there will be more of this obstruction." (Ivo Garić, The Union of Croatian Societies in Slovenia).*

Another problem our informants pointed out is instrumentalisation of the topic of minorities in order to achieve various political goals:

> *"The presence in the media is a very far reaching problem. If we look at our recent history, this is a consequence of the political events around the year 1990, which produced and had to produce this hatred. The hatred was stimulated, of this I am certain. It was intensified back then, but it still exists. This was also a part of that hot political stew – I am talking about the 'erased'[12]. The 'erased'*

[12] Erased residents of Slovenia are a group of 18.305 (almost 1 % of the Slovenian population), originating from different republics of the former Yugoslavia, whose personal data were in 1992 unlawfully transferred from a register of people with permanent residence to a register of people with no legal status in Slovenia. This measure later became known as "erasure" and its victims "the erased". More on this in: Dedić, Jasminka, Jalušič Vlasta, Zorn, Jelka (2003): **The Erased: Organized Innocence and the Politics of Exclusion**. Ljubljana: Peace Institute.

were always present on the political agenda when the politicians tried to achieve something else. Now another discussion about the 'erased' is on its way. Why? The elections are coming soon and this topic will be instrumentalized once more. The problem of the 'erased' will be used once again". (Živko Banjac, The Society of the Serbian Community)

A special right of minorities to participate in the public media is only granted to the members of the Italian, the Hungarian and, to a lesser extent, to the Roma communities. All "special rights of the minorities", including the right of communication through the media, are associated with "autochthonous" minorities. "This, however, does not mean that it is possible to encroach upon the rights of the "new" national communities, which are included among the basic human rights: 1) the right to express themselves freely; 2) the right to preserve cultural and lingual diversity; 3) the right to protect their identity and 4) the right to be treated equally without discrimination" (Komac, 2007:382). The following point of view is quite telling:

"We make up 12 percent of the population, but do not have a single minute of our own programme in the media." (Hasan Bačić, The Cultural Union of Bosniacs in Slovenia)

6. DISCRIMINATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

When speaking about discrimination or unequal treatment, which occurs to members of national/ethnic communities in everyday life, our informants emphasized the distinction between the overt and covert discrimination. The discrimination they are facing with in everyday life is often rooted deep within the institutional level.

"They say that there are two sorts of discrimination, hard and soft discrimination. Hard discrimination is present in legislation, in laws and other legal regulations, while soft discrimination is something we meet in everyday life. The literature says, and I would agree, that soft discrimination is more common than hard discrimination ..., which is, nevertheless, present as well. Hard discrimination is present in a sense that our national communities are not acknowledged as national minorities in the Slovenian Constitution. This is the first level of discrimination we are facing. We are not present in the constitution, though, in a way, we should be, as we were among the constitutive nations of the former Yugoslavia and the present-day Slovenia. In the first, place the absence from the Constitution. Then this continues in legislation" (Branko Matijević, The Association of Unions of Cultural Societies of the Constitutive Nations and Nationalities of the Former Yugoslavia in Slovenia)

Another problem that comes to the fore is the use of mother tongue in public, which is often the reason, why members of ethnic/national communities are regarded with disapproval or subjected to outright rejection. This happens despite the fact that the Article 61 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia states, "Everyone has the right to freely express affiliation with his nation or national community, to foster and give expression to his culture and to use his language and script".

"There are remarks in the sense 'How dare you [speak in your mother tongue; author's note], this is Slovenia!' Most of us use our mother tongue when we speak on the telephone. ... However, a certain discomfort is always present. If you speak in English, then everything is fine. This is the problem of small nations, which are very homogenous." (Hasan Bačić, the Cultural Union of Bosniacs in Slovenia)

People we interviewed drew our attention to the subtle pressures exerted upon the members of national/ethnic communities because of the use of their mother tongue on their work post, which can lead to different forms of "self-censorship":

"As far as public use of our mother tongue is concerned, of course, it can represent a problem. For instance, when I am at work and my phone rings and I know that a Serb is calling me, I will always carefully observe who is around to hear me speak. There is nothing spontaneous about answering the call. At one occasion it happened that I left the office and spoke on the phone in Serbian in the corridor, when a co-worker approached me and told me to be careful, when I speak, as someone could hear me." (Živko Banjac, the Society of the Serbian Community)

"When we call someone on the telephone, the first thing we ask is 'Možeš da pričaš?', 'Can you speak?' and this does not mean 'Do you have time to talk?', but 'Can you speak Serbian?'" (Vesna Miletić, the Society of the Serbian Community)

According to our informants, experience with different sorts of discrimination in everyday life vary among different generations of members of ethnic/national communities, living in Slovenia. The perception of discriminatory practices varies between the members of the first, second and third generation. The first generation has faced specific problems, mostly deficient knowledge of Slovenian language. The next generations of young people, born and educated in Slovenia, usually do not have this problem; however, they are facing other difficulties. All the people we spoke to point out that the second and the third generation are in a very stressful situation of the identity crisis, which is best described with a question "Who am I?".

"Then we have the second generation, which is hurt, which does not receive enough of our attention and is torn apart between different worlds, without the possibility to draw knowledge and strength from the cultural identity of their ancestors. On the other hand, they are stigmatized and they cannot fit inside the wider younger generation. The young have to struggle to be accepted for who they are but without any scorn." (Vesna Miletić, the Society of the Serbian Community)

"The younger generation is in some severe distress. They live in this conflict. Let us say that they speak Slovenian at home and then a question arises 'Who am I?' and it is easiest just to say 'I guess I am Slovenian.' On the other hand, the environment does not perceive these kids as Slovenians, but rather as a sort of a foreign body in the national corpus. They will always remain immigrants. Sadly, it is the surname that defines the attitude of the environment towards an individual." (Naum Taštanoski, The Macedonian Cultural Society Macedonia, Ljubljana)

The emotional distress of the second and the third generation, trying to be recognized as equal in the wider society, is also apparent in the process of quiet assimilation or self-assimilation, which is well illustrated by the alteration of personal first names and/or surnames[13].

"In my experience, the alteration of surnames, I think, is rather common in the second or the third generation. Then this voluntary assimilation takes place, when a person wants to have an easier life and says to oneself, 'Why did my parents give me this first name or this surname?' And of course if there is an opportunity, these kids write č instead of ć and thereby participate in a sort of soft assimilation. The second and the third generation can have this aversion towards the members of the nations they originate from ... I think this is a consequence of this soft assimilation, of the desire to be closer to the majority population and then this represents a burden. A child with such a surname gets a feeling of inferiority, is labelled for life with this mark. In the first generation we are aware of this from the first moment – we know, where we came from, but the third generation... they are in a very difficult situation, it is hard for them to identify themselves as they have lived here since they were born. They could be Slovenian, but are not and so they ask themselves: 'Why am I not Slovenian?' This represents an enormous emotional pressure for young generations." (Branko Matijević, the Association of Unions of Cultural Societies of the Constitutive Nations and Nationalities of the Former Yugoslavia in Slovenia)

"This pressure is huge. The son of my friend is 25 and he could not get a job anywhere. Therefore, he gave up his father's surname and took the one from his mother. There are some examples ... for instance, Rasim becomes Rastko." (Hasan Bačić, the Cultural Union of Bosniacs in Slovenia)

The presence of an ethnic distance of the majority nationality towards immigrant populations depends on the current social context and the political situation as well. Research of the public opinion polls reveals that the growth of intolerance towards immigrants can be observed during the time just before the attainment of independence of Slovenia and immediately after it. The results of the research project Perceptions of Slovenian Integration Policies from 2003 demonstrate that 70 % of the participants in the survey answered that intolerance among people exists. 40 % of participants in the survey thought that there is more intolerance present in society that there was before the declaration of independence, 30 % thought that the level of intolerance has not changed, and 13 % believed that there is less intolerance than there used to be. Serbs,

[13] The results of the research project Perceptions of Slovenian *Integration Policies* (PSIP 2003) indicate that more than a third of the sample population has found themselves in a situation, where they considered it best not to reveal their ethnicity. At the same time, over 5 % of the sample population answered, that they had changed their name and/or surname to a more Slovenian sounding form to avoid discrimination of the majority population; and over 15 % of the population answered that they occasionally think about doing so. They usually mentioned one of the following three reasons: marriage, adaptation to life in Slovenian society and providing a better perspective to their children (Medvešek, Komac (ed.), 2005:203).

Bosniacs and Muslims among the sample population, have mostly answered, that the level of intolerance has risen (Medvešek, in: Komac (ed.) 2007:199).

> *"Before Slovenia became independent the relationship towards the workers, let's call them immigrants, was dismissive but still tolerant to a certain degree. However, when there was a conflict, the immigrants were always the ones to blame. Various penalties and pettifoggery were usually aimed at immigrants rather than domicile workers. This was a sort of reaction of the national corpus. During and after the declaration of independence of Slovenia this intolerance towards people intensified. Intolerance was partly a result of hate speech, used by the politicians, when referring to the nations of the former Yugoslavia, especially Serbs, and this had an effect on people. The differentiation of Serbs, Croats, and Macedonians was not insignificant. This lasted for five, six years and is now slowly calming down." (Naum Taštanoski, the Macedonian Cultural Society Macedonia, Ljubljana)*

7. CONCLUSION

Members of national and ethnic minorities in Slovenia (whether recognised by the Constitution or not) are facing various forms of discriminatory treatment and social exclusion in everyday life, which could be considered as consequences of ethnic distance, ethnic rebound or ethnic intolerance. At the same time, we can predict that individual minority communities are affected in different areas, to a different extent, and with different intensity. The absence of a legal status defining minority rights of unrecognized ethnic communities and the stereotypically negative attitude of a part of the majority population towards immigrants, particularly those from the former Yugoslav republics, are the main factors governing the position of "new" national minorities in Slovenia. As noted by Medica (2004:99), these communities "... without a determinate status and designated terminology remain invisible social groups".

Discrimination based on ethnicity is not only an ethical or a moral problem of a certain society, but is also a latent scene of action for political conflicts. A striking example is the situation of the "erased" inhabitants of Slovenia, citizens of the republics of the former Yugoslavia, who were erased from public registers of the population of Slovenia by means of a collective administrative step in 1992. Despite the ruling of the Constitutional Court that this action was not legal, their situation has not changed to this day and this issue is only reaching the response of the wider public as a collateral victim of winning political popularity during the election campaigns.

Prejudices and stereotypes, which support the discriminative attitude towards the ("new") minority communities, are more than merely oversimplified judgements arising from narrow-sightedness or limited knowledge. Prejudices and stereotypes include political analyses and represent political measures, ideological tales that are the crucial driving force of existing societies and economic relations. They can only exist if they include all crucial material carriers of ideologies like the family, school, media, politics: they require discursive networks of signs, systems of symbols and manners of discourse and coding. Of course, they also require the "living power" of people,

who identify themselves with both sides of the prejudices, to start up the material and symbolic machinery and to keep it in motion. Prejudices and stereotypes based on ethnic appurtenance are nothing but alibis for the displays of power, so they probably do not even deserve their old-world names any more. Ethnic discrimination – whether insulting remarks and attitudes or the perfidious violence of ignorance – which is based on the alibi of prejudices is therefore never "an event", but rather a process, nesting within the relations of power.

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KAD Ć POSTANE Č: DISKRIMINACIJA NEPRIZNATIH NARODNIH MANJINA U SLOVENIJI

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Članak se bavi položajem i statusom 'novih' etničkih zajednica u Sloveniji, pri čemu se posebno posvećuje njihovim pogledima na diskriminaciju s kojom se suočavaju na području obrazovanja, zapošljavanja, društvene i političke participacije, u pristupu medijima i u svakidašnjem životu. Diskriminacija s kojom se susreću u svakidašnjem životu u velikoj mjeri proizlazi iz diskriminacije na institucionalnom području, jer slovenski ustav ne sadrži posebne odredbe za zaštitu (kolektivnih) prava tih manjinskih zajednica. Uvid u način, raspon, čimbenike i posljedice socialne, društvene i političke diskriminacije na temelju nacionalne odnosno etničke pripadnosti autorica predočuje analizom različitih istraživanja i baza podatka, koje na mjestima utemeljuje insertima iz intervjua s predstavnicama i predstavnicima manjinskih (kulturnih) društava. U zaključnom djelu autorica zagovara tezu da predrasude i stereotipi na kojima se temelji diskriminacija manjinskih zajednica nisu samo pojednostavljeni sudovi, nastali radi ograničenosti ili nedostatka znanja i informacija, nego su prije svega političko oružje, a upravo su ideološke priče ključni dio pogona postojećih društava. Etnička diskriminacija, bilo da se radi o uvredama ili o perfidnom nasilju ignorancije, temelji na alibiju predrasuda, zato to nikad nije 'događaj', nego uvijek proces, koji se ugnijezdio u odnosima snaga.

Ključne riječi: *MANJINE, ETNIČKA DISKRIMINACIJA, SOCIJALNA DISTANCIRANOST, SLOVENIJA*