DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ROMA EMPLOYEES IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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ABSTRACT

This article is about the rights of the Roma in North Macedonia and the level of discrimination that Roma are facing while employed in the public sector in the Republic of North Macedonia. The aims and objectives of the article are theoretical and practical understanding of the situation of Roma and the violation of their rights through direct and indirect discrimination at work. The data was collected during the period from May-July 2019 via 52 collected questionnaires from a total of 70 public servants who were asked to be a part of the research.

The article shows new data we have collected from employed Roma as public servants in different institutions in the state. The surveyed public servants were 52 in total, from which 34 are employees with secondary education, 17 are with university education and only 1 has a masters degree.

The questionnaire is composed out of 17 questions about the forms of discrimination, feeling or witnessing discrimination at their workplace, who caused the discrimination, witnessing the spread of prejudices and stereotypes about the Roma, rejection of colleagues to share an office with Roma, and who caused the discrimination. One of the results shows that 55% of the surveyed Roma did not have a single training from their employer in the last 12 months and

that 69% of those surveyed stated that they felt discrimination in the last 12 months on everyday basis.

Key words: Roma, Discrimination, Employment, North Macedonia, Public administration.

INTRODUCTION

This article is about the rights of the Roma in North Macedonia and the level of discrimination that Roma are facing. The aims and objectives of the article are theoretical and practical understanding of the situation of the employed Roma in the public sector and their human rights through our research and data from the collected 52 questionnaires.

At the very beginning we feel the need to explain and provide definitions what is prejudice, stereotyping, individual discrimination and institutional discrimination, due to the fact that our paper has evidence of all these. The term “*prejudice*” is defined as an opinion or judgment that is formed before hand, especially an unfavorable one based on inadequate facts, especially when one person shows suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred of other races, religions, occupations, etc. A “*stereotype*” is a fixed, over generalized belief about a particular group or class of people (Cardwell, 1996). It represents a mistaken idea or belief many people have about a thing or group that is based upon how they look on the outside, which may be untrue. Stereotyping people is a type of prejudice because what is on the outside is a small part of who a person is. According to Fred L. Pincus individual discrimination refers to the behaviour of individual members of one race/ethnic/gender group that is intended to have a differential and/or harmful effect on the members of another race/ethnic/gender group. Institutional discrimination, on the other hand, is quite different because it refers to the policies of the dominant race/ethnic/gender institutions and the behaviour of individuals who control these institutions and implement policies that are intended to have a differential and/or harmful effect on minority race/ethnic/gender groups (Pincus, 1994).

Conclusions from the research report from OSCE about ethnic discrimination in the Republic of North Macedonia show that there are cases of discrimination, mostly on ethnic grounds in the public sector but also cases of discrimination are increasing in the private sector as well.

We wanted to examine the level of discrimination due to my 11 years of experience in the highest institution of the state where I faced discrimination many times, therefore the research is valuable in verifying such personal experience of prejudice and discrimination, and in providing an impetus for consideration and action by the relevant authorities.

I am very pleased from the response given to us from the surveyed and I want to thank all of them for sharing their experience how is it to be an employed Roma in the public sector in the country and what difficulties they are facing while trying to be equal among equals.

DATA COLLECTING

The data was collected with questionnaires. The data was collected during the period from May-July 2019 via 52 collected questionnaires from a total of 70 public servants who were asked to be a part of the research. The target group was composed of employees of Roma ethnicity engaged in the legislative and executive sections of the state administration at the following levels:

- 1 state advisor;
- 1 head of unit;
- 1 advisor;
- 2 senior associates;
- 13 junior associates; and
- 34 junior officers.

The questionnaire was composed from the following questions:

1. Please state your ethnicity:

Macedonian	☐
Albanian	☐
Roma	☐
Turk	☐
Serbian	☐
Bosnian	☐
Vlachos	☐
Other	☐

2. Please indicate where you are employed:

Ministry	☐
General Secretariat, Secretariat for Legislation, Secretariat for European Affairs	☐
Agency, State Commission, Directorate	☐
Parliament, Ombudsman, President	☐
Administrative organization, Coordinative body	☐
Other, please specify:	☐

3. Level of education:

High school education	☐
University education	☐
Postgraduate studies	☐
Doctoral studies	☐

4. How long have you been employed in the institution?

< 1 year	☐
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> 1 year	☐
2-5 years	☐
5-10 years	☐
> 10 year	☐

5. Have you in the last 12 months:

	No	Yes	DN	NRS
Felt discrimination personally due to your ethnicity	0	1	-1	-2
You witness discrimination based on ethnicity	0	1	-1	-2
Please give an example:				

6. How often you have been discriminated against at work?

Rarely (few time during the year)	☐	1
Often (2-3 times during the week)	☐	2
Everyday	☐	3
Several times a day	☐	4

7. Who caused the discrimination?

Colleague	☐	1
Managerial structure	☐	2
Official who manages the institution	☐	3
External party	☐	-1

8. Have you faced the rejection of colleagues sharing an office with you?

No ☐	Yes ☐	Do not know ☐	No response ☐
0	1	-1	-2

9. Are you witnessing the spread of prejudices and stereotypes about the Roma community at your workplace?

No ☐	Yes ☐	Do not know ☐	No response ☐
0	1	-1	-2

10. Are you witnessing the spread of prejudices and stereotypes about other communities at your workplace?

No ☐	Yes ☐	Do not know ☐	No response ☐
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0	1	-1	-2
If yes, please specify:			

11. Do colleagues accept you as their equal?

No ☐	Yes ☐	Do not know ☐	No response ☐
0	1	-1	-2

12. Do you feel that you are being assigned inappropriate work responsibilities because of your ethnicity?

No ☐	Yes ☐	Do not know ☐	No response ☐
0	1	-1	-2

13. How many times have you been nominated for training in the last 12 months by your employer?

None	☐	-1
Once	☐	1
1-5 times	☐	2
5-10 times	☐	3
> 10 times	☐	4

14. Are you a managerial administrative officer?

No ☐	Yes ☐	No response ☐
0	1	-1

15. How many languages are you fluent in?

One (mother tongue)	☐	0
Two	☐	1
Three	☐	2
More than 3	☐	3
Specify how many:		

16. If you were a victim of discrimination, did you notify your employer?

No ☐	Yes ☐	No response ☐
0	1	-1

17. If you are a victim of discrimination would you turn to?

Ombudsman	☐	1
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Commission for protection against discrimination	☐	2
NGO	☐	3
Private lawyer	☐	4
Do not know	☐	-1
No response	☐	-2

RESULTS

First we would like to state that all the respondents (52) in our survey were members of the Romani ethnic group and only 1 Roma is a managerial administrative servant. The chart shows that the highest number of the respondents (22) were employees in one of the three Secretariats of the state, 18 were employed in different ministries of the state, 6 were employed in Agencies, Commissions and Directorates, 4 Roma were employed in the Administrative organizations and Coordinative bodies, and only 2 Roma from the respondents were employees at the Parliament, Ombudsman and the President of the state.

All of the respondents have formal education, where 65,38% (34) of the respondents have gained a high school education, 32,69% (17) of the respondents have university education, and only 1,93% (1 respondent) has a Master of Science degree. One of the respondents is still pursuing his doctoral studies and plans to gain a PhD degree at the beginning of 2020. Four of the respondents are pursuing their postgraduate studies, from which three are currently writing their thesis.

The chart shows that 21 (40%) of the respondents have a working experience in the current institution between 5-10 years, 18 (35%) of the respondents have more than 10 years of working experience in the institution, 6 (11%) of the respondents have a working experience in the institution between 2-5 years, 5 (10%) of the respondents have a working experience in the institution more than 1 year. Only 2 (4%) of the respondents have a working experience in the institution less than 1 year.

The chart shows that 33 (63%) of the respondents are fluent in more than 3 languages, from which 21 respondents speak 4 languages and 12 respondents speak 5 languages fluently. These respondents stated that they speak Romani, Macedonian, English, German, some also speak Turkish and Albanian. 16 (31%) of the respondents answered that they speak three languages fluently: Romani, Macedonian and English or German. 3 (6%) of the respondents answered that are fluent in 2 languages Romani and Macedonian. None of the respondents in our survey has stated that is only fluent in their mother tongue.

When we asked the respondents if they felt discrimination personally due to their ethnicity in the past 12 months, 36 Roma respondents (69%) stated that they felt discrimination personally, while 16 of the respondents (31%) stated that they did not felt discrimination personally due to their ethnicity in the past 12 months.

When we asked the respondents if they witnessed discrimination based on ethnicity in the past 12 months, 38 respondents (73,07%) stated that they witnessed discrimination based on ethnicity, while 14 respondents (26,92%) stated that they had not witnessed discrimination based on ethnicity in the past 12 months. From those respondents who had witnessed discrimination based on ethnicity 20 respondents (52,63%) witnessed Roma being discriminated against based on ethnicity, 14 respondents (36,84%) witnessed Albanians being discriminated against based on ethnicity and 4 respondents (10,52%) witnessed Turks being discriminated against based on their ethnicity.

36 Roma (69%) from a total of 52 respondents stated that they had been discriminated against at work. When asked how often they had been discriminated against at work 11 respondents (30,5%) stated that they had been discriminated against everyday and also another 11 respondents (30,5%) stated that they often (2-3 times a week) been discriminated against at the workplace. 9 of the respondents (25%) stated that they had been discriminated against at work several times a day, while 5 of the respondents (14%) stated that they had been discriminated against at work rarely (a few times during the year).

When we ask the respondents who caused the discrimination, 21 respondents (58,33%) stated that the appointed official of the institution was the one who did the discrimination against them, 12 respondents (33,33%) stated that the discrimination was caused by a colleague from work, 3 respondents (8,33%) stated that the discrimination was caused by the managerial structure (bosses) in the institution. None of the respondents was discriminated against by external party/client.

When asked about facing the rejection of colleagues to share an office with, 29 of the respondents (56%) answered that they faced with this problem in their workplace, 14 of the respondents (27%) stated that they did not face this kind of a problem while working. 6 of the respondents (11%) stated that they do not have information if this kind of a problem occurred at their workplace and 3 of the respondents (6%) did not respond to this question.

When the respondents were being asked if they feel accepted as equal by their colleagues, 32 of the respondents (61,53%) answered that they are being accepted by their colleagues as equal, 18 of the respondents (34,61%) that they do not feel equal with their colleagues, and 2 of the respondents (3,84%) did not answer this question.

When we asked the respondents did they witness the spread of prejudices and stereotypes of Roma at their workplace, 36 respondents (69,23%) stated that they witnessed spreading of prejudices and stereotypes of Roma at their workplace, 14 of the respondents (26,92%) stated that they did not witness spreading of prejudices and stereotypes of Roma at their workplace, and 2 (3,84%) of the respondents did not answer this question.

When we ask the respondents did they witness the spread of prejudices and stereotypes about other communities at their workplace, 42 of the respondents (81%) stated that they witnessed spreading of prejudices and stereotypes of other communities at their workplace, and 10 of the respondents (19%) stated that they did not witness the spreading of prejudices and stereotypes of other communities at their workplace. 30 respondents (71,42%) witnessed spreading prejudices and stereotypes of Albanians at their workplace, 7 respondents (16,66%) witnessed spreading prejudices and stereotypes of Turks, and 5 respondents (11,90%) witnessed spreading prejudices and stereotypes of Vlachs at their workplace.

When we asked the respondents are they being assigned inappropriate work tasks because of their ethnicity, 43 of the respondents (83%) stated that they feel that they are given less complicated and inappropriate work assignments due to their Romani heritage and assignments that are not in balance with their education. Only 9 of the respondents (17%) answered that they are not given inappropriate work tasks due to their ethnicity.

When we asked the respondents how many times they were sent to a training by their employer in the last 12 months, 29 of the respondents (55,76%) answered that in the past 12 months they had not been nominated for any training, 12 of the respondents (23,07%) stated that they were nominated between 5-10 times for trainings during the last year, 8 of the respondents (15,38%) stated that they were sent to trainings between 1-5 times during the last year, and only 3 respondents (5,76%) answered that they have been nominated once to attend trainings during the past 12 months.

When we asked the respondents if being discriminated against where they will turn to for protection of their rights, 25 of the respondents (48,07%) answered that they will seek protection at the Ombudsman, 11 of the respondents (21,15%) answered that they will go to the Commission for protection against discrimination, 7 (13,46%) of the respondents stated that they will seek protection of their rights via private lawyers, 5 of the respondents (9,61%) stated that they will seek protection in the NGO sector and 4 of the respondents (7,69%) answered that they do not know where to seek protection in such cases.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Roma employed as public administration servants in different state institutions in the Republic of North Macedonia are facing discrimination from their colleagues, managers and from the appointed officials of the institution. This occurs even though, of the employees, a greater number of Roma are fluent in more than 3 languages, have

university education and a working experience more than 10 years; and yet only 1 Roma has a managerial position.

- What is worrisome is the fact that 58,33% of the respondents stated that they had been discriminated against by the appointed official of the institution where they work.
- 33,33% of the respondents stated that they had been discriminated against by a colleague and 8,33% stated that the discrimination was caused by the managers in the institution.
- 69% of the respondents said that they felt discrimination in the past 12 months.
- 73,07% of the respondents stated that they witnessed discrimination based on ethnicity, especially when it comes to Roma, Albanians and Turks.
- 30,5% of the respondents stated that they feel everyday discrimination at their working place for being Roma.
- The respondents were faced with situations when non-Roma refused to share an office with their Roma colleague. This was confirmed by 56% of the respondents and as a “solution” to this problem the employed Roma are often placed with other Roma in offices.
- Between the employees in the state institutions there is spreading of different prejudices and stereotypes for Roma; this is confirmed by 69,23% of the respondents. Also the respondents witnessed spreading of prejudices and stereotypes for Albanians, Turks and Vlachs at their workplace.
- 83% of the respondents stated that they are given inappropriate work assignments and that the given tasks are not according to their education.
- 61,53% of the respondents feel that they are being accepted by their colleagues as equal.
- Our research shows that the employed Roma at the state institutions know where to seek protection when being discriminated against and only 7,69% answered that they do not know where to seek protection in this case.
- More serious systematic steps should be undertaken in reducing the multiple discrimination in the state administration of the country.
- Affirmative actions should be undertaken with Roma public servants when it comes to work trainings and seminars.

- The leaders from the Romani political parties in the state should organise a conference for non-discrimination and the state officials should all be trained what is politically correct and appropriate.
- Promotion of equality and the concept of non-discrimination should be established. The role of promoter should be played in coordination by the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, the Ombudsman and the civil sector. The promotion of the concept of non-discrimination should result in easier recognition of discrimination by the citizen; make institutions sensitive to the issues falling in this area; and the greater use of legal mechanisms for protection against discrimination.
- Segregated offices made up of only Roma public servants should be abolished, and Roma, like all others, should share offices with public servants of different ethnic groups to ensure integration and multiculturalism.

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