

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN LIP SERVICE AND PRACTICE

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IZVLEČEK

Medkulturni dialog med leporečjem in prakso

Pričujoče besedilo presoja koncept medkulturnega dialoga, kot je opredeljen v evropskih in domačih dokumentih v zvezi s kampanjo Evropskega leta medkulturnega dialoga 2008, z vidika nekaterih izsledkov mednarodne raziskave Potrebe po migrantkah in njihova integracija v starajoče družbe, ki je bila izvedena v Sloveniji med letoma 2006 in 2007. Besedilo skuša odgovoriti na vprašanje, ali je medkulturni dialog zgolj »moralni kompas« delovanja Evropske unije v bodočnosti, ali pa gre za že uveljavljeno prakso izmenjave mnenj med nosilci in/ali udeleženci skupin z različnim družbeno-kulturnim ozadjem.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: medkulturni dialog, tujci, migracije, migrantke, Slovenija

ABSTRACT

Intercultural dialogue between lip service and practice

This essay discusses the concept of intercultural dialogue as it is defined in the European and Slovenian documents which refer to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008, in view of some findings of the international research project Needs for Female Immigrants and their Integration in Ageing Societies, which was carried out in Slovenia between 2006 and 2007. The essay seeks to explain whether intercultural dialogue is a “moral compass” for the future image of the EU, or an established practice of an already effective exchange of views between the cultural carriers and/or participators in groups with various socio-cultural backgrounds.

KEY WORDS: intercultural dialogue, foreigners, migration, female migrants, Slovenia

2008 – THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

In the last half of the twentieth century, the process of building up the European

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Community has been marked by the “accession strategy” and as a result, by various connections of different actors within and outside its borders. Therefore, the management of “diversity” has become a priority of the Council of Europe. The question of whether the future of Europe will be a Europe of distinctive communities of “cultures” bound together by extant and mutually enforcing commonly held, even stereotypical notions about the Others and their dissimilarity was only one of the questions which led the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union in 2006 to adopt a decision² to name the year 2008 the “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue”. The list of conventions, declarations, recommendations and other reference texts of the Council of Europe relevant to intercultural dialogue is too long to be entirely presented in this essay.³ However, the list is the basis for the document well known in the public as the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*,⁴ with its illustrative subtitle “Living together as equals in dignity”.

As early as May 2006, the Committee of Ministers determined that the White Paper would identify the way to promote an intensified intercultural dialogue between societies in Europe and between Europe and its neighbours. For this purpose, the Committee of Ministers held a wide-ranging consultation in 2007, which comprised stakeholders at various levels: from members of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, members of migrant and religious communities, cultural and non-governmental organisations, to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, the European Committee of Social Rights, and other bodies of the Council of Europe. The consultation also aimed at forming a nomenclature for the White Paper, and the definition of the dialogue. Yet the participants were reluctant to explain intercultural dialogue in detail. The organisers understood such a response partly in the fact that intercultural dialogue was not a fixed norm with a simple definition, and partly as a hesitancy to clarify something which cannot be equally applied in various contexts (White Paper 2008: 8–9). However, the consultation participants agreed that universal principles, as upheld by the Council of Europe, provided a “moral compass” (ibid.: 10) for a culture of tolerance, and also in determining its boundaries against any form of discrimination or acts of intolerance. Therefore, the White Paper understands intercultural dialogue as

a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. Intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies. It fosters equality, human dignity and a sense of common purpose. It aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse world views and practices, to increase co-operation

² Decision 1983/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (Official Journal of the European Union L 412/44, 30 December 2006).

³ The list can be found arranged in chronological order in the White Paper (2008), pp. 52–60.

⁴ In the text, the abbreviation White Paper is employed.

and participation (or the freedom to make choices), to allow personal growth and transformation, and to promote tolerance and respect for the other (ibid.: 17).

Although the aforementioned Decision of 2006 does not offer a definition of intercultural dialogue, it does explain that intercultural dialogue is an implicit constituent of various Community policies and instruments. These policies and instruments comprise a broad palette of fields of the structural funds, education, lifelong learning, youth, culture, citizenship and sport, gender equality, employment and social affairs, combating discrimination and social exclusion, combating racism and xenophobia, policy on asylum and the integration of immigrants, human rights and sustainable development, audiovisual policy and research (Decision No 1983/2006, (6)). Intercultural dialogue is devoted to all citizens who permanently or temporarily live in the EU mainly to create a sense of European identity (ibid.: (8)), taking into account various aspects of belonging to a community and also common values of the EU. The latter are further defined in Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union and are well grounded on the principles which are common to the Member States. The principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law are guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms signed in Rome on 4 November 1950 and resulted from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, as general principles of Community law.

In the overall and specific objectives of the Decision (Article 2), it is further explicitly noted that intercultural dialogue is imagined as a sustainable process which will continue beyond the year 2008. This is also evident from the co-financing of diverse measures on the Community level (e.g. information and promotional campaigns on practices of intercultural dialogue, and research related to the issue) and on the national levels (e.g. co-financing of national initiatives related to the activities of intercultural dialogue per member state). Slovenian state institutions were no exception in this endeavour. The Ministry of Culture has taken over the role of leadership and coordinator. The minister, however, has appointed a trans-sectoral working group called the National Body for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The National Body included representatives of the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Sport, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of the RS for Youth, Office of the Republic of Slovenia for European Affairs and the Government Public Relations and Media Office. In accordance with current national policies, the Body prepared a National Strategy (NS),⁵ a strategic document for the implementation of the Decision in Slovenia. Common and specific aims of ministerial policies referred to:

- the establishment of civil/social dialogue on as many levels of social life as possible, in cooperation with non-governmental organisations and the media from all fields that involve intercultural dialogue;

⁵ The full name of the Strategy is the National Strategy for Implementing the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

- inclusion of the dialogue as one of the leading principles of Slovenian foreign policy;
- enabling mobility within and outside the EU, especially in the fields of art, science and education, particularly in such a way as to support the flow of ideas and individuals;
- co-ordinated migration policies within and outside the EU;
- encouraging intergenerational dialogue;
- treating state borders and EU borders as points of co-existence;
- stressing the importance of multilingualism;
- vertical communication and continuity in the education system, from primary to higher education, which respects the principle of intercultural dialogue;
- placing emphasis on intercultural dialogue in informal forms of upbringing and education (NS 2008:1-2).

The authors of the Strategy were also aware that the implementation of such ambitious aims could be achieved only by the inclusion of various and numerous actors in the project. Beside the representatives of ministries and government services, they also invited non-governmental and non-profit organisations and the office of the Ombudsman to join the National Committee, as well as, depending on the subsequent detailed elaboration of the content of projects, selected professional associations, societies, individuals and companies who wished to be actively involved in projects. In this line, it is not an exaggeration to view the conference *Researching Migration*, organised by the Slovenian Migration Institute SRC SASA⁶ in 2008, as one of the projects of the year in Slovenia. This essay discusses the results of the international project *Needs for Female Immigrants and their Integration in Ageing Societies* (FEMAGE), partly presented at the conference round table on the activities within the international projects on migrations in Slovenia. If intercultural dialogue is to be a required practice of the present and future demographic and ethnic structure of the European Union, particularly in the view of its further enlargement, it is necessary to examine to what extent the dialogue is present in everyday life. Is intercultural dialogue only a “moral compass” for the functioning of the EU, an aim to be pursued due to the ageing of Europe, its low fertility, migration and as a result, many-coloured ethnicity? Or “must” the dialogue be a two-way process between diverse collocutors in order to be successful? In the essay, such questions are discussed through the interpretation of some FEMAGE results. The two-year research project, which included researchers, stakeholders of immigration policy and practices, and a group of selected collocutors – female migrants – is a well-suited exercise for examining the understanding of intercultural dialogue in Slovenia.

⁶ The conference was supported by the City of Ljubljana and the Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Slovenes Abroad. The conference participants included pupils and teachers at various Slovenian elementary schools, i.e. the participants in Learning Migration (Comenius Thematic Network), EUNIC Slovenia, researchers from the SRC SASA and the other institutions working on migration issues, and young movie makers from Croatia, Spain, Germany, Portugal and Slovenia.

RESULTS OF THE PPAS WITH REGARD TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE SLOVENIAN POPULATION TOWARDS FOREIGNERS

As a response to increasing public calls for a better understanding of European populations' attitudes towards the population dynamic (fertility, aging and migration), more than a decade ago a group of researchers from various European countries designed a survey on this issue entitled the Population Policy Acceptance Survey (PPAS). Between 2000 and 2003, partners from fourteen European countries (Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia) carried out projects at the national level financed solely through their national resources.⁷ The survey included questions pertaining to a broad set of attitudes and opinions about demographic changes including fertility behaviour, intergenerational flow of resources and services, and population policy measures. Partners from eight countries, Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Germany Poland and Slovenia, included an additional optional set of questions in their questionnaires pertaining to migration and the integration of foreigners. Thus, each partner created a national data set which served as a basis for an analysis of respondents' attitudes towards fertility decisions, parenthood, the meaning of family, life aspirations, population policy measures and policies, gender relations, balancing of work and family life, and care for the elderly.

With the aim of achieving international validity for the individual national data sets, the group of already collaborating researchers applied for and acquired resources from the European Commission for the project *Population Policy Acceptance Study: the Viewpoint of Citizens and Policy Actors Regarding the Management of Population Related Change* (DIALOG, duration 2003-2005) within the fifth Framework Programme. The European Commission financially supported international comparative analyses of the already existent PPAS national data sets. In order to assure the international comparability of the analyses, the analysis of the optional module pertaining to migration and integration of foreigners was excluded from this project. For this reason, the eight partners who included this set of questions into the PPAS national research continued their cooperation in the sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission, this time within the project *Needs for Female Immigrants and their Integration in Ageing Societies*. In the framework of this project, the international research group created a new data set, entitled FEMAGE-MIG, that finally gathered information about respondents' estimations regarding the number of foreigners and migration trends in individual countries, the advantages and disadvantages of migration, the integration of foreigners, and the measures of national migration policy. The FEMAGE-MIG data set formed a basis for new internationally comparable analyses. Data sets of the interviews with immigrant women and the focus

⁷ In Slovenia, the PPAS research was carried out in 2000 under the title: Population, Family and Welfare: attitudes towards policy and measures. The research was carried out on a representative sample of 1550 inhabitants of Slovenia of both genders, aged 20 to 65 years.

group analysis were subsequently created on this basis. In this section of the article, we discuss part of the results from the FEMAGE-MIG international data set that indirectly pertains to intercultural dialogue. We comment on the respondents' estimations about the presence of foreigners in the "host country" and on their attitudes regarding the acceptance or rejection of foreigners based on the following questions and statements:⁸

- When we speak of foreigners in our country, which groups do you think of?⁹
- Do you think that, in the last ten years, the number of foreigners living in our country has increased, decreased or remained more or less the same?¹⁰
- Foreigners who have lived in our country for at least five years should have the right to vote in local elections.¹¹
- The presence of foreigners is positive because it allows exchange with other cultures.
- The government should grant general amnesty to all illegal migrants from time to time.
- Companies who employ illegal migrants should be punished with a large fine.
- Foreigners are necessary to do the work which Slovenians no longer want to do.
- Legal foreign workers support the social security system with their contributions and taxes.
- Foreigners take jobs away from Slovenians.
- Foreigners who want to live in our country for a longer period of time are obliged to learn our language and to get used to our customs and rules.

In Slovenia, the immigrants from former Yugoslav republics are most frequently (by 87 percent of respondents) recognised as foreigners. Although the respondents were not aware of the precise number of foreigners in Slovenia, 90 percent of them estimated that the number of foreigners has increased over the last ten years.¹² Only 10 percent of respondents (Figure 1) were familiar with the statistical data on the number of foreigners in the country while 40 percent of them significantly overestimated this number. Despite the relatively low number of foreigners in Slovenia,¹³ two thirds of respondents expressed the view that there were too many foreigners in the country (Figure 2).

⁸ The national questionnaires of the PPAS, including the Slovenian one, are available in the English language at: http://www.bib-demographie.de/cln_090/nn_970380/EN/Projects/DIALOG/ReportsPapers/rq.html.

⁹ This was an open-ended question.

¹⁰ The respondents chose among the following answers: 1. has increased; 2. has remained almost the same; 3. has decreased.

¹¹ The respondents chose their further answers on the basis of a five-point Likert Scale, e.g. from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5).

¹² With these estimations it is necessary to emphasise once more that this part of the PPAS research was carried out in Slovenia in the year 2000.

¹³ 2 percent of foreigners were recorded by the Statistical Office in Slovenia in the year 2000 and 2.7 percent in the year 2007, Source: SURS 2007.

Figure 1: Differences between respondents' estimations and actual number of foreigners in Slovenia (Source: Population, Family and Welfare: attitudes towards policy and measures, 2000).

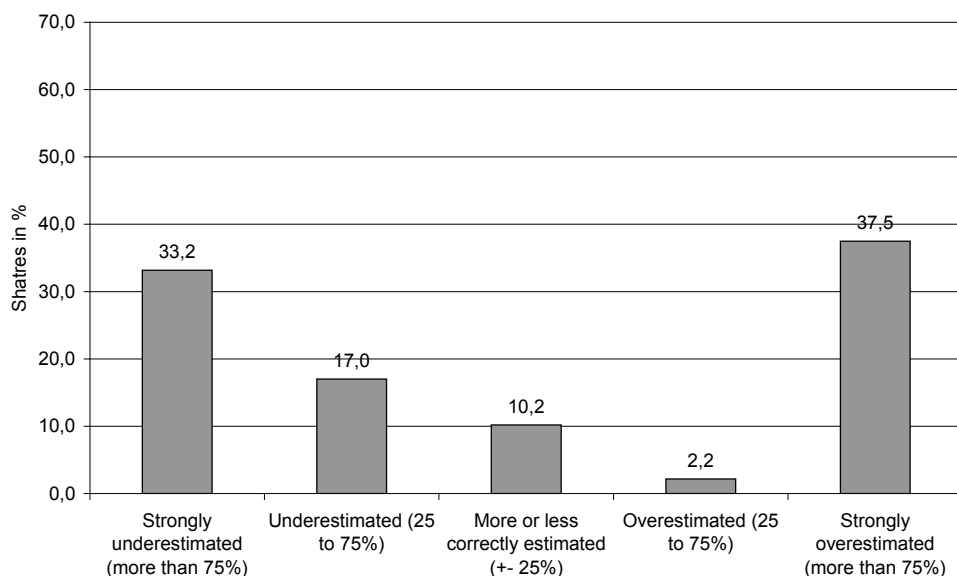
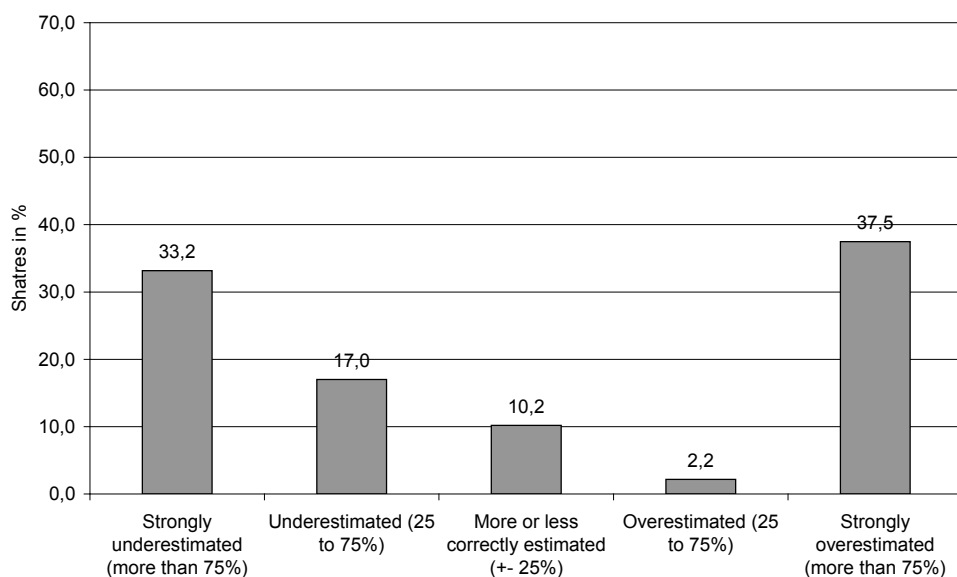
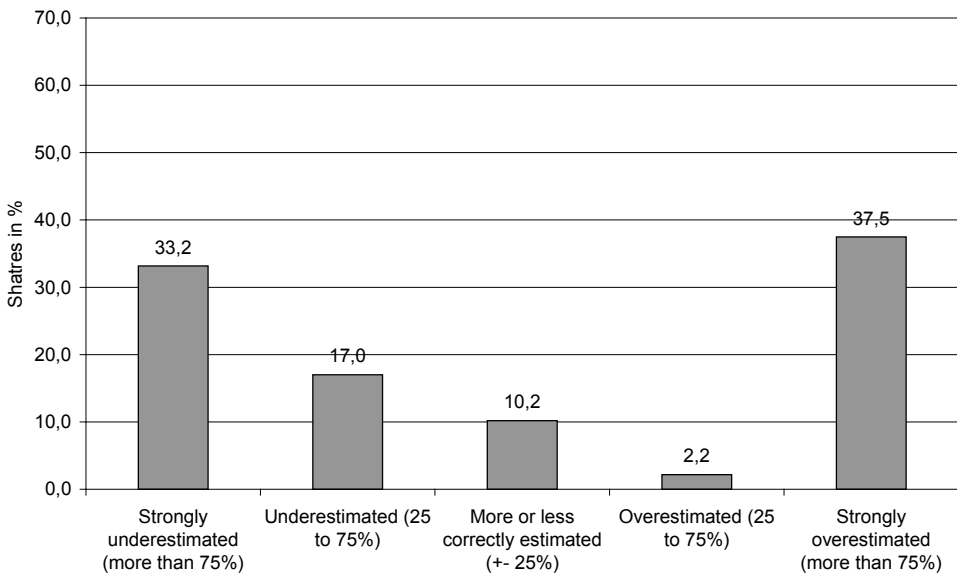


Figure 2: Opinion about the number of foreigners in Slovenia (Source: Population, Family and Welfare: attitudes towards policy and measures, 2000).



Furthermore, the results show that more than half of respondents support neither the idea of giving foreigners the right to vote and granting general amnesty to all illegal migrants, nor the possibility of becoming acquainted with other cultures through foreigners (Figure 3). On the other hand, a strong agreement with the demands to sanction employment of illegal migrants prevails among the respondents in Slovenia (76 percent).

Figure 3: Agreement with the statement “The presence of foreigners is positive because it allows an exchange with other cultures” (Source: Population, Family and Welfare: attitudes towards policy and measures, 2000).



Due to unfavourable demographic trends of population ageing in Europe, which is also a consequence of long lasting trends of low fertility, the need for immigration is mentioned in public discussions (along with pro-natalistic measures) as one of the possible scenarios for solving the “demographic crisis” (e.g. Green Paper 2005: 6). Considering this view, we analysed and compared a set of statements from the PPAS survey that referred to fertility and attitudes towards foreigners. A considerable share of respondents (62 percent) wants the population in their country to increase. But from this statement it is not possible to assume that the respondents would like to see this happen through increased fertility or through immigration. The first conclusion is not plausible due to the fact that only one third of respondents agree with the statement that having children is a social obligation. The second conclusion cannot be drawn due to the negative attitudes towards foreigners expressed by respondents. That is, the respondents perceive foreigners primarily as carrying out the work that the local population no longer wants to do (Figure 4) or they are not

yet aware of the benefits the community could have from immigrant labour and migrants' contributions and taxes to the social security system (Figure 5). Last but not least, 44.8 percent of respondents expressed a fear that foreigners would take jobs away from the local people (Figure 6). It seems that the residents of Slovenia do not link migration to a solution for the effects of low fertility.

Figure 4: Agreement with the statement “Foreigners are necessary to do the work which the Slovenians no longer want to do” (Source: Population, Family and Welfare: attitudes towards policy and measures, 2000).

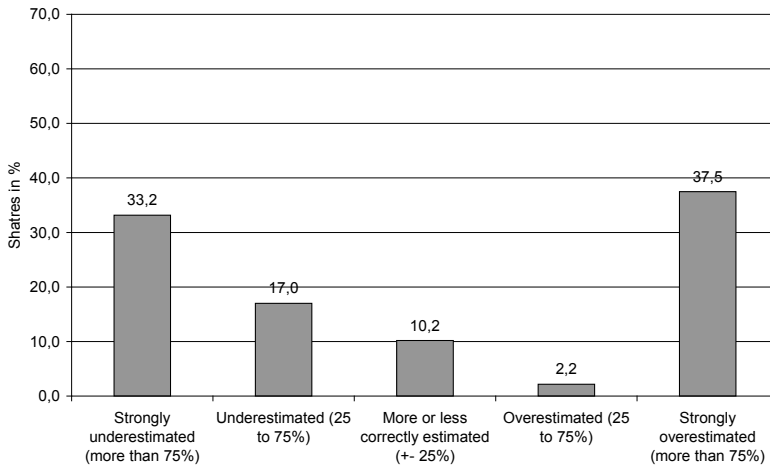


Figure 5: Agreement with the statement “Legal foreign workers support the social security system with their contributions and taxes” (Source: Population, Family and Welfare: attitudes towards policy and measures, 2000).

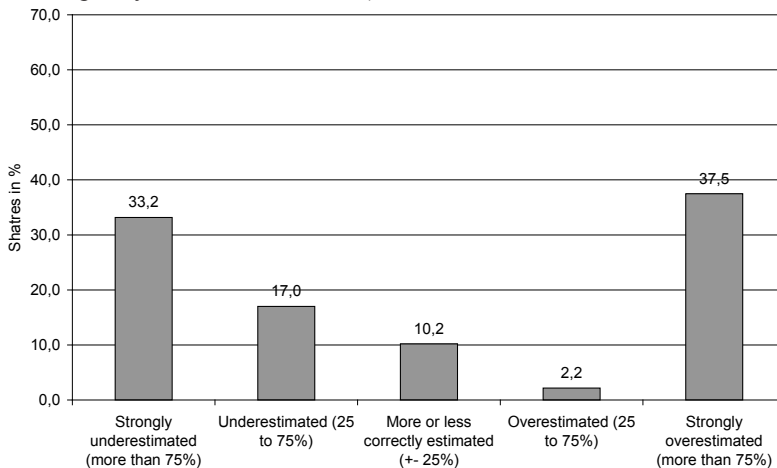
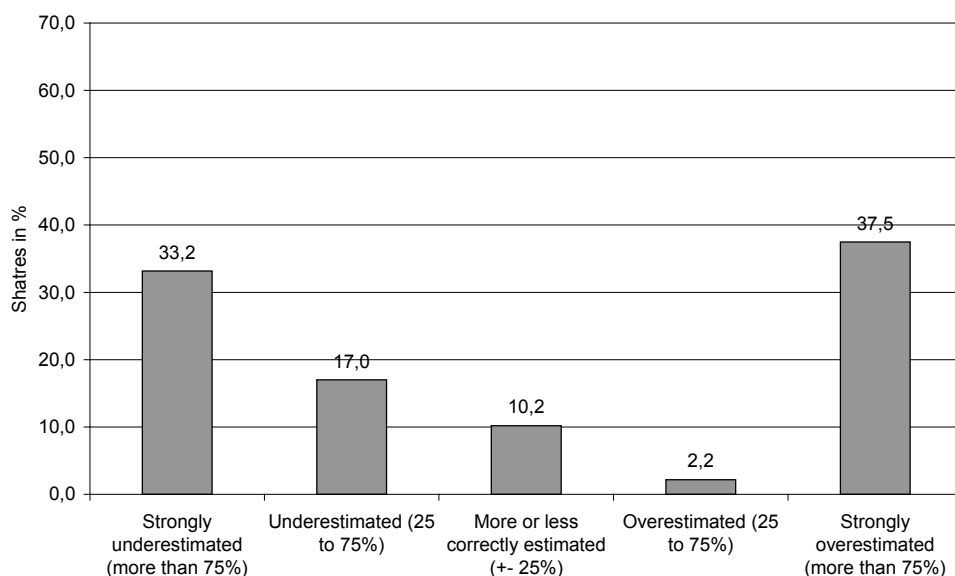


Figure 6: Agreement with the statement “Foreigners take jobs away from Slovenians” (Source: Population, Family and Welfare: attitudes towards policy and measures, 2000).

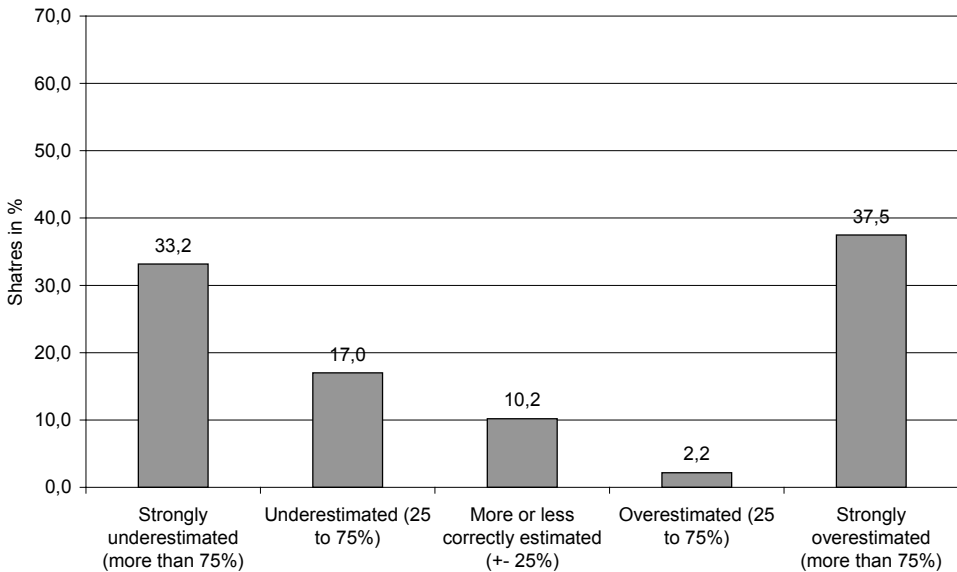


The last analysis,¹⁴ into which some independent variables like education, age and place of residence were included, confirmed that acceptance of foreigners increases with respondents' education level and that rejection of foreigners increases with a decrease in respondents' education level. Additionally, acceptance of foreigners is (less than education, but still significantly) correlated with respondents' place of residence: urban dwellers are significantly more in favour of foreigners than their rural counterparts. And last but not least, the younger the respondents the less negative their attitudes towards foreigners.

As the results show, the residents of Slovenia believe that foreigners are obliged to accept the rules of the new country. This is corroborated by Figure 7, which indicates that 83.4 percent of the respondents believe that foreigners are obliged to learn the language and to get used to the customs and rules of the country in which they live. On the other hand, the respondents are much less likely to be ready to accept foreigners and to learn about their culture. From this we can conclude that in Slovenia the integration of foreigners is understood as a one-way process rather than as an intercultural dialogue as envisaged in the above mentioned European and national documents.

¹⁴ This analysis of independent variables connected with respondents' attitudes of acceptance or rejection of foreigners required the designing of new composite variables. For a precise description of the design procedures of these new variables see Černič Istenič and Knežević Hočevar 2006: 28–31.

Figure 7: Agreement with the statement “Foreigners who want to live in our country for a longer period of time are obliged to learn our language and to get used to our customs and rules” (Source: Population, Family and Welfare: attitudes towards policy and measures, 2000).



EXPERIENCES WITH IMMIGRATION

In order to capture the perspectives, experiences and expectations of female migrants in their new society, interviews were conducted with women living in Slovenia from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosniac women) and the countries of the former Soviet Union. Thirty interviews were carried out (fifteen with each group), including a biographical-narrative part as well as open-ended and closed questions.¹⁵ Both the findings of the PPAS database analysis and the interviews with female migrants constituted a starting point for the third phase of the project – a focus group discussion among the various migration policy stakeholders. The structure of the participants and their institutional affiliation (Table 1) were quite balanced: four participants from the governmental sector, four from the non-governmental sector, two from public institutions (Employment Service of Slovenia and Slovenian Institute for Adult Education) and a representative of the Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Implementation of the Principle of Equal

¹⁵ The main themes of the interviews were the following: life in the society of origin, family background, division of labour and relationships within the family (both in the society of origin and in Slovenia); decision to migrate, arrival in Slovenia, formal and informal social networks, economic, social and political integration into the new society, paid work, expectations regarding retirement, and understanding of integration.

Treatment. However, two of the participants from the government/public sector were also active in various non-governmental and/or civil society initiatives. The female migrant in our focus group was also involved in work for migrants in a non-governmental organisation, and thus had a double role: that of a collocutor in an interview and a representative of an NGO. In accordance with the focus group scenario, which was intended to be internationally comparable, the discussion was focused on three main issues: perception of migration and migrants, integration of migrants, and female perspectives on migration. The aim of the focus group was not to verify findings from the first two phases of the research project (analysis of the PPAS database and the interviews), but rather to comment and critically reflect on them.

Number of focus group participants and their institutional backgrounds

1. Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Realisation of the Equal Treatment Principle
2. Non-governmental organisation
3. Non-governmental organisation
4. Migrations Division, Ministry of the Interior
5. Employment Service of Slovenia
6. Non-governmental organisation
7. Non-governmental organisation
8. Migrations and Naturalisation Section, Ministry of the Interior
9. Sector for Labour Migration, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs
10. Integration of Refugees and Aliens Section, Ministry of the Interior
11. Slovenian Institute for Adult Education

In the first part of the discussion, the focus group participants commented on the PPAS results.¹⁶ They agreed that an understanding of integration as a one-way process was prevalent among the population of Slovenia. Such a perception was illustrated by a representative from the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (9): “I have a feeling that the public, meaning people who know these things a little bit better, imagines an integrated migrant as a practically non-disturbing foreigner, that has completely adopted the habits [of the new society] and does not stand out in any regard.”

In contrast to such an understanding of integration, the discussants perceived integration as a two-way process that concerns not only migrants but also the wider society. In this regard, two participants from NGOs questioned the meaning of the term “becoming acquainted with other cultures”, which can mean different levels of knowledge about and contact with these cultures to different people. They also pointed out that becoming acquainted with other cultures is too often a one-way process. To illustrate:

¹⁶ The focus group participants received summaries of the PPAS analysis and the findings from the interviews with female migrants prior to the discussion.

Well, I think it is like this: the prevailing opinion is that we like to get familiar with certain segments of your culture, but we do not want you to influence our culture. And this is often problematic, since people do not perceive becoming acquainted with other cultures in the sense of integration, but in a sense of assimilation, segregation, etc. (7).

The mass media were identified by participants as one of the main factors having an impact on more positive attitudes towards foreigners among the “native population” by providing balanced reports on migration issues. The participants in the discussion, regardless of their institutional background, also emphasised the role of the state and its institutions as responsible in cases of manifestations of xenophobia. They were of the opinion that the state should react to xenophobic outbursts quickly and appropriately, and should sanction such behaviour. The participants were unanimous about the necessity for systemic rather than partial solutions to such issues. They put particular emphasis on “preventive measures” that refer to the need for education about other societies as early as in elementary schools and to more efficient and informed forms of co-operation between various actors in migration policy. They stressed that becoming acquainted with other cultures is often more about “folklore” and superficial knowledge of other cultures, rather than about enabling equal opportunities (for instance in employment) to members of these cultures.

The findings of interviews with female migrants partly confirm the results of the PPAS survey that show that in Slovenia the rejection of foreigners prevails over their acceptance. Some collocutors said they did not experience special problems due to their ethnic affiliation and foreigner/immigrant status. Nevertheless, many stories revealed specific problems and obstacles they faced as immigrants and pointed to stereotypical views of immigrants on part of the “native population”.

The collocutors viewed their position on the labour market as the most problematic issue. Their position on the labour market was often marked by prolonged periods of unemployment and/or performing jobs that were not in accordance with their professional qualifications (“deskilling”). The interviews confirmed that female migrants are often treated discriminatively and stereotypically by employers and other officials they come into contact with. To quote an example: “they promised they would call, but they didn’t, as I was a foreigner and didn’t speak the Slovenian language well” (Sofia from Ukraine).

Finding employment was particularly difficult for women who did not yet possess Slovenian citizenship. For instance, Emina from Bosnia and Herzegovina came to Slovenia with a law degree in 1995. She searched for employment for ten years. Her legal status—first possessing temporary and later permanent residence status in Slovenia—was referred to by employers as the main reason for not being willing to employ her:

[...] then they told me, because I had temporary residence, if only you had permanent residence, and then when I got permanent residence they said, if only you had Slovenian citizenship. When I acquired Slovenian citizenship, they said if only you

had a professional examination. Of course, I did not have it, since I had no working experience, I had never worked until then, and of course it was a vicious circle which was impossible to control and close. Then in 1995 I coincidentally met a guy [...], who had worked at [name of organisation] and said how about trying with Slovenian. [...] And they asked me if I wanted to volunteer for them. And I said no, I am looking for a job (laughter) and it lasted until last year. I wrote applications, went to job interviews, but once my counsellor at the Employment Office told me that I would not find a job with my surname, which is a typical Bosnian surname and that I should therefore change it. And I said I wouldn't do it. [...] So I really gave up, I thought I would never find a job, so last year, while I was working, I later returned to volunteer work at [name of organisation] because I thought I would go crazy at home. I mean I am not the type of person to dust until everything is clean. [...] And then I was with my daughter for three years, and then she went to kindergarten and I was alone again, I really did not know what to do with myself. Then I went to interviews, and asked if I could work for free, anything. And then when I read the applications, and it said I had to have Slovenian citizenship, I said to myself I would never get a job. And then I applied, my attention was pointed to a job offer at [name of organisation] and I came for an interview and they hired me. If this hadn't happened I would still be sitting at home.

Aida, who had completed a four-year secondary school in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also tells about how she was looking for employment for a long time, probably due to the fact she did not possess Slovenian citizenship:

I had been looking for a job for a long time. And now I also work through an employment agency. It is not the job I want to do, I can't say it is paid according to my education level, I just hope something will come out of it. [...] Because I didn't have citizenship, no institution wanted me. Some said to my face it was citizenship, some said it wasn't but it was.

Since they were not allowed to work for more than ten hours a week for ten years (from 1992 to 2002), legal employment on the labour market in Slovenia was virtually impossible for forcibly displaced women from Bosnia and Herzegovina under temporary protection. Consequently, they had to perform illegal jobs, for instance in private households. The inability to obtain early inclusion in the labour market often caused feelings of loneliness and isolation in the "new society" and to a large extent prevented women from establishing contacts with the "native population".¹⁷

Poor knowledge of the Slovenian language was also an obstacle for the collocutors. However, due to their socio-economic position, many didn't even have the opportunity to

¹⁷ More on the experiences of forcibly displaced women from Bosnia in Herzegovina in an article by Sanja Cukut: *Ženske kot akterke migracijskih procesov. Prisilne priseljenke iz Bosne in Hercegovine v Sloveniji* (Women as Actors in Migration Processes. Forcibly Displaced Female Migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Slovenia) (Glasnik SED, Vol. 48, No. 3,4).

study the language systematically and regularly. Oksana from Russia recalls: “I went to a Slovenian language course at the Faculty of Arts, it was the second part of the course, and it was great, but unfortunately we then entered a difficult financial period and I couldn’t continue.” Like other interviewees, she adapted by learning the language in more informal settings, alone, or through conversations: “Unfortunately, I was learning from life. I know from my own experiences that a person needs an official language course in the beginning, with a native speaker. So I know if I had had a regular course, 100 hours, for example, it would have helped me a lot. Now, if I need it, I study myself.” At the time the interviews were being conducted, the legal provisions in Slovenia didn’t envisage state financing of language courses for foreigners, with the exception of people with refugee status.¹⁸

Although the PPA analysis showed that the “native population” expects that foreigners will immediately learn the Slovenian language, the interviews with female migrants demonstrated that institutional (legal) possibilities for early inclusion into Slovenian language courses are usually limited. From the interviews, we can conclude that the ability to learn Slovenian is mostly conditioned by the female migrants’ own initiative and the financial means at their disposal.

Collocutors also encountered stereotypical views of migrants in other spheres of everyday life, for instance in access to health care and in search of housing. Adisa from Bosnia and Herzegovina recalls the problems her family came across when looking for an apartment, after they had been forced to leave the refugee centre in 2002:

It was hardest when we had to finally leave the centre; it was difficult to find an apartment. Wherever you went to look and arrange something, when it was said that you were a refugee they reacted, oh, no, we won’t accept a refugee. It was hard, you were used to life in the barracks, true, you had one room, but it was different when you learned you will have to get out of the centre, you are going into a different environment, you don’t know what kind of a landlord you will come across, whether they will want to take you or not. Our experience was that most of them didn’t want to take us.

Emina from Bosnia and Herzegovina described discrimination by a health care worker due to her lack of knowledge of the Slovenian language she encountered right after coming to Slovenia:

Before I came, we enquired whether I could have health insurance in Slovenia. And they said yes. When I came they told me that there was no such possibility. At that

¹⁸ This problem is partly resolved by the Decree on the Integration of Foreigners, which came into force on 30 June 2008. Third-country nationals residing in Slovenia on the basis of a permanent residence permit, family members that have a temporary residence permit on family reunification grounds and those residing in Slovenia for at least two years on the basis of a temporary residence permit with a minimum one-year validity are entitled to free participation in Slovenian language courses and programmes for getting acquainted with Slovenian history, culture and constitutional regulations.

time, I could not be insured as the wife of a foreign worker. Then, the problem of paying for everything arose, since it cost a huge amount of money. And I know they told me to try to arrange refugee status, which was impossible, of course. I know I went to an outpatient clinic, it was somewhere in Vič, where the refugee centre was, I had not been in Slovenia for even a week, and I of course I spoke in Bosnian, and there was a lady I came to see. And she said; until you learn Slovenian; don't come here, you stupid Bosnian woman. And I left and I cried at home. I arrived in February, and in March I had already enrolled in a Slovenian language course so I didn't just come and sit, and, I don't know, count the stars. I made as much as I could out of myself. It was hopeless for me, I said, where have I come.

Regarding the PPAS finding that survey participants in Slovenia are to the smallest extent (compared to the other countries participating in the survey) aware of the contributions of foreign labour to the country's tax and social security system, it seems crucial to mention the largely invisible and unacknowledged work of female migrants in private households. Such is not only the example of women from Bosnia and Herzegovina that had temporary protection status in Slovenia, but also of some women from the republics of the former Soviet Union, who had come to Slovenia to baby-sit children and/or perform household chores. At the international level and among migration researchers, domestic work of female migrants is acknowledged as socially important in the context of transformations attributed to the mass expansion of the service sector (Kofman et al. 2000, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003). However, the focus group discussion showed that an awareness of the importance of migrant labour force in domestic work in Slovenia is still lacking among migration policy stakeholders and that detailed analyses of female migrants' work in this area are missing (see also Pajnik et al. 2006, Hrženjak 2007). In the discussion, the need for a labour force in the construction industry was stressed, but there was less discussion of traditionally feminised sectors (such as, for instance, the service sector and work in private households). The discussion was generally centred on the "need for migrants" from the viewpoint of the Slovenian society regarding labour force shortages in certain sectors. It was, however, less oriented towards the issue of ageing or low fertility and towards migration as a possible scenario for solving such demographic issues.

A cost-benefit approach to migration and its restriction prevailed in the focus group discussion. Such an understanding of migration was amplified with "arguments" pertaining to cultural differences and similarities that are supposedly influencing the possibility and level of migrant integration into the new society. A perceived "cultural closeness" of some ethnic groups, particularly from the territories of the former Yugoslavia, was identified as a factor contributing to quicker and easier integration into the new society. Other ethnic groups (for instance, those from the Middle East), were seen as "culturally more distant" from the "native population". However, regarding the fact that around 90 percent of foreigners in Slovenia come from the former Yugoslav republics, it might not be surprising that the respondents in the PPAS research identified as foreigners mainly people from these territories. Interviews with female migrants and the focus group dis-

cussion confirmed that persons from the former Yugoslav republics are still perceived as foreigners and “Others”, although most have already acquired Slovenian citizenship, or were even born in Slovenia as so-called second generation migrants. Religion, especially Islam, is increasingly being identified as a sign of supposedly irreconcilable cultural differences and of the inability to “integrate successfully” into “our society”. This claim was corroborated by the experience of one of the focus group participants that was born in Slovenia (2):

Personally, even when I finished university, I came across a very big problem finding my first job. My employment opportunities were extremely limited. Why? I represented a different population, something that came from the East, although I was born in Slovenia, a Slovenian citizen; I have no other homeland. I represented a threat because I was a veiled Muslim woman. Some companies have a dress code for their employees, who are not allowed to express their identity, nor their religious affiliation, through their dress. This was my main problem. For two years, I was in the category of hard-to-employ persons. This category includes women over fifty years of age, handicapped people, etc. And myself among them, a twenty something girl, due to the veil, that presented a threat to Slovenian employees.

On the basis of such findings, we can conclude that female migrants still experience concrete effects of a commonly held notion of irreconcilable cultural differences between “us” and foreigners, which are not in accordance with the idea of intercultural dialogue, especially regarding its emphasis on communication as a two-way process. However, this is not only the experience of female migrants. The focus group participants also agreed that integration, which as a rule should encompass the main elements of the notion of intercultural dialogue, is in practice still perceived as a one-way process. Such a definition leaves no room for an equal understanding of “immigrant cultures” on the part of the “natives”, or such an understanding is limited to an enthusiasm for, for instance, ethnic cuisines.

DIALOGUE: AMONG CARRIERS OF CULTURES OR PARTICIPATORS?

To go back to the notion of intercultural dialogue as understood in the White Paper, one cannot fail to observe that it is loosely defined. Intercultural dialogue is described as a process of open and respectful exchange of attitudes and ideas among individuals and groups with a diverse ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background and heritage. However, the question arises of whether such a description does not include the assumption about *a priori* bounded groups or their members who share a “common background”. Or the assumption that individuals who belong to a given group (e.g. ethnic or linguistic) are automatically the carriers of uniform knowledge about the culture of this group, and are therefore already distinguished from individuals of some other comparable groups. A boundary between them *a priori* presumes the same-kind groups of people who are

supposed to be a “uniform mass of actors who interact with such a type of a uniform mass of actors of an external Other” (Šumi 2000: 178).

A similar supposition is implicitly involved in the international research project FEMAGE. In the beginning, the researchers designed the project as a comparative study of female migrants. Therefore, a requirement for comparability led the partners to focus on selected groups of female immigrants, who had to be comparable by their declared ethnic affiliation in some European states. Yet the groups of persons who are residents of the states included in the internationally comparable project, but are not residents of at least two of them, were *a priori* excluded from the research. In this respect, the debate among project partners about a “suitable research sample” of immigrants was illustrative. The first difficulty appeared in the selection of the Bosniacs as a representative group of female immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who live in Slovenia and Austria. Yet declared Serbs and Croats, who also emigrated from Bosnia and Herzegovina, also live in both countries. The criterion of declared ethnicity is not problematic only in the view of the inclusion or exclusion of certain groups of people. Such a criterion also binds together people into a uniform mass of carriers of a given culture, simply because they officially stated their collective affiliation.

The same holds true for the measurement of the acceptance of foreigners by the “domestic” population. At the very beginning, the questionnaire offered an open-ended question, which read: “When we speak of foreigners in our country which groups do you think of?” A careful reader cannot overlook the suggestive nature of the question that refers to a “group of people” who share a quality of foreignness. Successive questions also talked about foreigners or immigrants as a uniform mass of people assessed by the interviewees through the statements on their acceptance of foreigners, which was measured by researchers. In this way, the researchers offered limited answers on a scale of more or less generosity towards abstract groups of people. In this respect, the second phase of research, grounded in the collection of life histories of female immigrants, was more promising. Despite the limited presentation in this essay of only those parts of immigrants’ stories which referred to their own experiences of “rejection” by the “new environment”, the latter did not prove to be a quality of the “domestic population” alone. It was also the consequence of unsuitable and ineffective state mechanisms regulating immigrants’ position in the “new environment”.

From this perspective, one can agree with those scholars who emphasise that the members of diversely imagined groups are primarily the participators in such groups and not only their carriers. It is assumed that participators “continuously create (negotiate) meaning” (Šumi 2000: 178) about the content of “culture” through their social actions, rather than just carrying it from generation to generation. In this view, the locus of observation of the boundary between such groups is shifted from the observation of the static delineation between *a priori* defined groups to the observation of activities among the participators in a given group. Finally, a shifted perspective enables an explanation of continuously newly determined boundaries. Or, to put it with the loosely defined notion of intercultural dialogue: despite a schematically defined exchange of views and ideas

between individuals and groups with various ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds, intercultural dialogue still presupposes a sustainable process of “a deeper understanding of diverse world views and practices, to increase co-operation and participation in order to make choices”.

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POVZETEK

MEDKULTURNI DIALOG MED LEPOREČJEM IN PRAKSO

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Načrtovalci širitve evropske skupnosti, se vsaj zadnje desetletje bolj intenzivno ukvarjajo z vprašanjem, kako upravljati skupnost posameznikov in skupin z različnim družbeno-kulturnim ozadjem, da bi pripadnost skupnim evropskim vrednotam postala resničnost. Odločili so se, da bodo delovali v smeri razvijanja kohezije med "kulturno" raznolikimi družbami v skupnosti, da ne bi postala Evropa prihodnosti Evropa ločenih skupnosti kultur. S tega vidika sta Evropski parlament in Svet Evropske unije konec leta 2006 sprejela Odločbo št. 1983, da se leto 2008 razglasi za Evropsko leto medkulturnega dialoga, pri čemer je ta opredeljen kot trajnostni proces spoštljive izmenjave mnenj med posamezniki in kulturami z različnim etničnim, kulturnim, verskim in jezikovni ozadjem. Obsežen nabor dejavnosti za doseg tega cilja med drugim vključuje tudi preučevanje družbenih procesov, na podlagi katerih bi oblikovalci politik lahko oblikovali parcialne ukrepe za doseg cilja – "Živeti skupaj v enakopravnosti in dostojanstvu", ki je cilj Bele knjige o medkulturnem dialogu, t.j. skupnega dokumenta Sveta Evrope.

Pričujoče besedilo obravnava razumevanje medkulturnega dialoga v Sloveniji med sogovorniki na različnih družbenih položajih. Pri tem se osredotoča na presojo izsledkov mednarodne raziskave *Potrebe po migrantkah in njihova integracija v starajoče družbe* (FEMAGE), ki so bili predstavljeni na lanskem (2008) posvetu *Raziskovanje migracij* kot eni izmed akcij Evropskega leta medkulturnega dialoga v Sloveniji. Na podlagi rezultatov FEMAGE projekta skuša prispevek odgovoriti na vprašanje, ali je medkulturni dialog, ki "mora" biti dvosmeren proces med raznolikimi sogovorniki, že uveljavljena praksa v Sloveniji, ali zgolj "moralni kompas", cilj h kateremu mora težiti?

Dvoletna raziskava FEMAGE je bila v Sloveniji izvedena v letih 2006 in 2007; skupina raziskovalcev iz Slovenije je bila eden izmed osmih partnerjev, vključenih v raziskavo FEMAGE, ki je bila kot skupen projekt z istim naslovom odobrena v 6. okvirnem programu Evropske komisije. Raziskava FEMAGE je analizirala podatke, zbrane s pomočjo

anketne raziskave, intervjujev in fokusnih skupin na nacionalnih ravneh. Tako je vsak partner oblikoval podatkovno zbirko, ki je zajela informacije o ocenah anketirancev glede števila tujcev in migracijskih trendov v posamični državi, prednosti in slabosti migracij, integracije tujcev in ukrepov nacionalne migracijske politike; o izkušnjah migrantk; in nenazadnje o razumevanju migracijskih procesov v Sloveniji s strani deležnikov priseljen-skih politik in praks. Rezultati anket so pokazali, da so kot tujci v Sloveniji najpogosteje prepoznani priseljenci iz nekdanjih jugoslovanskih republik. Večina vprašancev jih gleda predvsem kot izvajalce del, ki jih domače prebivalstvo ne želi opravljati; se ne zaveda koristi, ki bi jih skupnost imela na podlagi dela priseljencev in njihovega plačevanja pri-spevkov in davkov za njeno socialno varnost; in nenazadnje, večina anketirancev ne gleda prisotnosti tujcev kot možnosti za spoznavanje njihovih kultur, ampak nasprotno, samo od tujcev pričakuje, da sprejmejo pravila in navade novega okolja. Analiza doživljanja novega okolja s strani migrantk večinoma podpira anketne rezultate. Njihove pripovedi kažejo, da jih prebivalstvo na eni strani večinoma presoja na podlagi njihove domnevne “kulturne bližine/oddaljenosti”, na drugi strani pa je iz njihovih pripovedi moč razbrati, da ima stereotipno gledanje nanje svojo podlago tudi v institucionalnih omejitvah, ki so posledica neurejenih zakonskih mehanizmov urejanja migracijskih zadev. Slednje so potr-dili tudi udeleženci fokusne skupine. Poudarili so, da je integracija v Sloveniji še vedno razumljena kot enostranski proces, ki se nanaša zlasti na dolžnosti migrantov in tujcev, da sprejmejo pravila novega okolja, manj pa na dovetnost “domačega prebivalstva” za učenje o “drugih kulturah” oziroma za oblikovanje primernih okoliščin za enakopravno udeležbo vseh akterjev v procesu dvosmerne komunikacije.

Nenazadnje prispevek predlaga alternativno perspektivo obravnave medkulturnega dialoga. Ta naj bi prednostno obravnaval tako “kulturno izmenjavo”, ki predpostavlja enakovredne udeležence v procesu pogajanja o njenih pomenih, ne pa nosilcev njenih statičnih pomenov.