

In Kranj, we don't have a special places of worship for Islam and Buddhism. From this reason we couldn't fill a questionnaire sheet. But we had a meeting with some of representatives of Islam and Buddhism and we made a interviews with them.

BEING A MUSLIM IN SLOVENIA

Interesting. Sometimes I feel like a ship sailing between rocks. You always have to be careful and watch out for the rocks so the ship doesn't sink. And you sail slowly...thinking you are an experienced sailor.

Some of us make it, the others don't. How many times I've heard a phrase: « You are OK, but I am really frustrated by those, who have lived in Slovenia for more than 30 years and they still speak Bosnian only...»

I was born in Jesenice. My father came here in 1973. When he was in his village in Bosnia he heard people saying that there were buses waiting for the workers to take them to Slovenia. When he asked what type of education he needed to get there, they told him he only needed a healthy head, arms and legs. He was suitable, so that's how he came to Slovenia.

It was hard for him to get used to difficult and dangerous work in the factory, but it was easier because of his relatives and friends around him. And there were more and more coming. While a steel factory in Jesenice evolved, they needed more and more healthy boys and men.

In 1975 he married my mother who also came to Jesenice from Bosnia and only a year later I joined them.

Even though I was born in Jesenice, I didn't know a single Slovene word. My childhood world was limited to a few blocks of flats where everyone spoke Bosnian. So starting school was a completely new world for me. Different. And horrible. I learned Slovene intensively and despite troubles at the beginning I adjusted quickly. There were many times during the whole educational process when me and other »non-Slovene« children combined both languages when speaking in front of the class. Some found that cute, but the others didn't like it at all.

They always laughed at us, pupils and teachers. In the third grade one of my classmates told me to go back to Bosnia. Why, when I was born in Jesenice (Slovenia)? In the fourth grade one of the teachers said that we stink and that we are all stupid, because our parents hit us in our head. This teacher is still teaching. Then once in the seventh grade a history teacher told us, that she was afraid of the fact, that there were almost 40 percent of Bosnians in lower classes.

I always found it interesting, how many nick names we had. In Slovenia we were called Bosnian, Yanks or Sweds. But when staying in Bosnia we were Slovenians, Slovenijales, Cankar or Laško. Lots of Muslims were confused, asking themselves who they were, Slovene Bosnians or Bosnian Slovenes. It became even harder after the 11th of September, because all the Muslims were treated as terrorists and extremists.

Muslims in Slovenia don't know about their own religion, history,...But I am not surprised due to the approach of the schools, press, politicians,... At school the Muslim history is as much important topic as Dodo bird from Madagascar.

But, no matter what, I love and respect this country for everything it has given to me. Free education, peace, chance for development, freedom of speech and thinking.

What else could be done to become even better for Muslims? When the Mosque is finished, we will get the one only missing part: feeling, that we are equal, respected citizens, a part of this society. I think there are politicians and institutions in this country who have been blocking this process for almost 40 years and not even once asking themselves how frustrating it feels to those who work hard for their whole lives, not even having normal, human appropriately conditions to pray in peace.

Slovene politics should hire some highly educated Muslims, born and living in Slovenia, to extend to rich Muslim Markets, where lots of opportunities are. Australia, for example, is getting millions of dollars selling Halal food all over the world. Why can't people in Slovenia see and use that?

Respect your own and from the others, appreciate foreign and your own. It will all be easier. And we shall never forget women, very important and equal part of our community. I will never forget the words once Bosnian writer Nedžad Latić said about women. His words were fantastic: » It won't get any better until we see our mother in every woman and our sister in every girl. «

I love Slovenia. Even though I will never understand why some people keep calling us Švedi (Sweds).

by Ahmed Pašić – publicist and expert for islam