



Story of Mrs. Manush – When Old Age Does Not Mean a Chance to Rest

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Abstract:

In the framework of the project Migration to the Centre we talked to Mrs. Manush who comes from Armenia. Mrs. Manush had been recognized as a mandate refugee by the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in the Slovak Republic and she has been living in Slovakia for 20 years now.

Mrs. Manush is 66 years old; however, due to insufficient number of years of employment she is not eligible to receive retirement allowance.¹ She lost her last regular job one year ago. Since then she has been going through difficult and anxious months during which she has been looking for a job and engaging in short term works. Her only regular income is the social allowance for persons living under the subsistence level. Despite the fact that she would wish to live a little more peaceful life taking into account her age, she is forced to fight for her survival every day. Without help of others she would not be able to cope with her situation.

How is your life in Slovakia?

Just now it has been quite difficult for me. I am in the age of retirement, but I cannot receive any retirement support, because I still need to work for four more years. There is no job for me. I am very exhausted from this situation. What is it going to be like in future? I have no money. How should I live? From what? All this is very complicated for me.

Do you receive any support from the Labour Office?

The Labour Office supports me with monthly social allowance for persons living under subsistence level and for housing, which is altogether only 180 Euros per month. But 180 Euros is not enough even for the rent of my apartment. I don't understand how I should live of this

¹ To receive retirement allowance Mrs. Manush needs to work and be economically active in Slovakia for at least 15 years. In case of Mrs. Manush, the Social Insurance Company registers only 11 years of employment.

money.

Mrs. Manush, what did you used to do in Slovakia? What kind of jobs did you have?

I had some manual jobs in Dunajska Streda. I also had a job as a cleaning lady in the local pharmacy. These were really good times for me. I worked there for seven years.

In the small town you live, you do not have access to internet. How do you receive information about employment opportunities? How do you search for job?

Well, I don't have too many friends. There is a newspaper with advertisements called „Avizo“ which is distributed for free to post boxes. I always read it and look for a job. But still I cannot find anything.

How did you find your jobs in the past?

The manager in the pharmacy liked me and she felt sympathy for me. She could see that I am not interested in money. She has tested how I work several times and then she saw that she could rely on me.

What job would you like to do if you could choose?

You know, I bake very well. I can also do cleaning jobs, help in the kitchen.

Do you have any documentation regarding your education, e.g. vocational certificate as a cook or a baker?

I don't have any documentation. When we were leaving from Armenia, we had no time to think about it. For baking I don't have any papers, but I have skillful hands for it.

And what did you do in Armenia?

I used to be a graphic artist. But now in this age my hands are already shaky. I have completed my studies at the commercial academy. I don't have any documentary evidence about my education. In Armenia maybe I could arrange some documents, but they want money for everything. And money is what I don't have.

Was it difficult for you to learn Slovak language?

Not so difficult. I like Slovak language and Slovak people. I learnt it while working and in

everyday life. I have never attended any language course.

Is language important for you when searching for a job?

When I attend job interviews, they understand me. Sometimes they don't even recognize that I am a foreigner. Although my accent is still quite notable.

What do you think is the reason that you cannot find a job?

I don't know. I cannot say that it is because I am a foreigner which can be recognized by my accent. Maybe. But I think it might be because of my age. I heard in the radio that employers are reluctant to employ people in retirement age. I would like to work at least through short term works, but these are also difficult to find.

How do you see your future?

If I was young I would tell you immediately. But in this situation my future is closely related to work. I need to have some job and some money in my wallet. At the moment I live from one day to another, from one month to another. Every month is a battle for me just to get enough money to pay the rent for my housing.

And who helps you with your survival in the situation when your income is not high enough to cover the cost of your housing?

I help myself. Sometimes I have some cleaning jobs, sometimes I bake cakes. Good people helped me through donation portal and they have been sending me money to support me. On this occasion I would like to thank all of them from my heart. This is how I survived so far. I have no family here, except for one daughter. But she has her own family now, children and her own problems. If she can, she helps. But I don't require help from her. I live alone, lonely. In this loneliness sometimes I really don't know how to live on further.

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