



# The Lack of Ethnically Sensitive Data in Serbia's Multiculturalism Policy

GORAN BAŠIĆ<sup>1</sup> | ZORAN LUTOVAC<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

International organisations whose bodies monitor the realisation and protection of the rights of national and ethnic minorities (Council of Europe, United Nations) have expressed their concern about the lack of data in the Republic of Serbia's reports on the protection of the rights of national minorities, and they have provided some recommendations in order to amend the situation. Prompted by these remarks, this paper considers the flaws in Serbia's policy of multiculturalism. The main finding – that Serbia's policy of multiculturalism is not founded on verified and measurable data – has been examined further by indicating the principles and methodologies of collecting data based on ethnic and national identity. By using a range of examples, the paper points to the social issues that occur due to neglect in collecting data on citizens' ethnicity, while the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to collect-

ing such data is also considered. A holistic approach to researching ethnicity assumes using not only demographic methods, but also methods from and knowledge of other social sciences and humanities. The United Nations supports the idea that the approach to ethnically sensitive data should be holistically founded with its position that all data regarding people's identity must be based on human rights – a Human Rights-Based Approach to Data (HRBAD), in which case the relevance of statistical data is promoted.

## KEY WORDS

ethnicity | data | identity | human rights | Serbia

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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Politicological Research and Public Opinion, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade (Serbia) | ✉ [gbasic@idn.org.rs](mailto:gbasic@idn.org.rs)

## INTRODUCTION

Serbia, as well as the region of South-east and Central Europe in which it is located, faces demographic challenges that have a significant impact on the number and structure of the population. These changes are particularly visible in autochthonous minority ethnic groups. The demographic changes in these groups are influenced by acculturation, assimilation, discrimination, and “invisibility” in large cities – factors that do not have dominant significance for changes in the structure of the “majority” population. The ever-increasing frequency of emigration to countries of origin and “seeking one’s fortune” in economically developed countries – as well as the consequences of wars and conflicts in the ex-Yugoslav region – also contribute to the dynamics of demographic movement of autochthonous ethnic minorities in the region. Finally, people become more and more aware of the multifaceted and dynamic nature of ethnicity and they increasingly reject ethnic identity as rooted, immovable, and monolithic. This has little bearing on statistics, but a significant effect on society and its dynamics.

Simultaneously, states undertake measures designed to protect and preserve the identities of their ethnic minorities,<sup>1</sup> which should contribute to

establishing a social atmosphere based on tolerance, equality, and the preservation of ethnocultural diversity and societal security. However, such policies have failed to help stop the emigration of ethnic and linguistic minorities from the territories they traditionally inhabit (Bašić, Tatalović and Žagar 2018). What’s more, since the internal and cross-border migration of people from ethnic minorities has increased in frequency, it may quite confidently be assumed that the normative protection of ethnocultural identities has not contributed to ethnic minorities’ decisions to continue living in their traditional homelands. The concept of traditional (historical) association of national (ethnic) minorities with certain regions and the idea of their right to preserve their identity being specially regulated and protected are not new. The agreements that the League of Nations concluded with states after World War I already contained provisions to protect the religious and cultural rights of minority populations concentrated on the terri-

National Minorities’ Members, while the Assembly of the Sarajevo Canton adopted the Law on the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities in 2011, and the Assembly of the Republic of Srpska adopted similar legislation in 2004. Romania, Slovenia, and Macedonia dedicated special attention in their respective constitutions to guaranteeing the rights of national (ethnic) minorities, while Bulgaria and Greece did not make a particular effort to regulate the protection of minority rights. Finally, Kosovo, the sovereignty of which is still being disputed and negotiated, adopted the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and their Members in 2011.

<sup>1</sup> Hungary adopted its Law on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities in 1993, Serbia and Croatia in 2001, Montenegro in 2006, and Albania in 2017. As for Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2004, the Parliament of BIH adopted the Law on the Protection of the Rights of

tories that they traditionally inhabited (Pržić 1933: 116), and this trend continued after World War II, especially in Yugoslavia, through the recognition of identities and protection of political and cultural rights of national minorities on certain territories (Devetak 1989: 219). In contemporary political and legal context, this concept is contained in article 10 paragraph 2, art 11 para 3. and art 14 para 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe, wherein the state parties are recommended to invest special effort in protecting the cultural rights of the national minorities on the territory that they inhabit traditionally and substantially (Council of Europe 2016: 14)

However, apart from the general statistical data on nationality and mother tongue – segregated by gender, age, and place of residence – which are collected in regular population censuses, public policies and professionals do not use ethnically segregated data to serve as the basis for the efficient management of the policy of multiculturalism in Serbia. The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has noticed this omission. In its Fourth Opinion on the Implementation of the Framework Convention in Serbia, it offered two recommendations that point to the systemic lack of quantitative and qualitative ethnicity-based data.<sup>2</sup> The first

recommendation concerns the establishment of a sustainable framework for the collection of ethnicity-based data that is rooted in human rights, but also the promotion of complementary qualitative and quantitative research projects, which would allow the monitoring of the position of members of national minorities, as well as the establishment, implementation, and periodical amendments of minority policy. The other recommendation pertains to the establishment of a sustainable framework for a human rights-based approach to data collection in public administration, to serve as the basis for the establishment, implementation, and periodical amendments of concrete and effective measures aimed at long-term and measurable progress in national minorities' representation in public administration, especially of those minorities living a marginalised existence in secluded locations (Council of Europe 2019: 2).

In a contemporary context, the ethnic aspects of multicultural policy are influenced by ever-present migration. The flow of migration is perceived in the emigration of young and, as a rule, educated professionals from the Republic of Serbia, as well as in the increasingly frequent waves of refugees arriving from Africa and Asia. These processes should become parts of the

Implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, expressed its concern about the lack of appropriate data in the report made by Serbia, especially emphasising the failure of the state to collect different data concerning ethnic and racial minorities (item 9f) (UN Human Rights Committee 2017: 3).

<sup>2</sup> Before that, the UN Committee on Human Rights, in the Concluding Remarks concerning the Third Periodical Report of Serbia on the

multicultural policy, since the emigrant structure contains a substantial number of Serbian citizens belonging to national minorities, while the newcomers – who are to be expected and are necessary to maintain a dynamic economy – come from backgrounds that are rather different when it comes to culture. The impact of modern migration events on the policy of multiculturalism in Serbia and its neighbouring countries cannot be neglected, despite social and political resistance (Rašević 2018: 35), while the experiences in integration policies for migrants (Lukić 2018: 640) largely correspond to the national policies of integrating autochthonous ethnic minorities, which is the focal point of this paper.

## METHODS AND CHALLENGES

Collecting ethnically sensitive data has been neglected in Serbian social statistics. This lack of data makes it more difficult to realise national minorities' rights, monitor the implementation of affirmative measures, and enact other public policy measures aimed at the integration and social inclusion of minorities. A comparative analysis of the population census results and research initiatives on the realisation of national minorities' rights indicates that population censuses serve to collect data on general demographic movements within national minority populations in Serbia (Marinković 2013: 3; Raduški 2007), but also brings to attention the lack of data collected in qualitative research.

Thus the paper emphasises the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach when collecting data relevant to the position and realisation of rights by national and ethnic minorities. A holistic approach to ethnicity research assumes using not only demographic and statistical methods, but also those of other social sciences and humanities, since the expected goal of minority policies and the aspiration of national minorities' members is to protect and preserve their collective ethnocultural identity. Concepts such as acculturation, assimilation, integration, and social distance – which indicate the actual social position of ethnocultural (national) minorities – are dominant in anthropological, sociological, and psychological research, and only when demographic data are combined with the data acquired in the research projects of those and other scientific disciplines, e.g. economics, is it possible to foresee and establish measures for protecting and preserving minority identities.

The paper also uses the experiences of authors acquired by undertaking qualitative research into the position of national minorities, primarily the following studies: *Effective Representation of National Minorities in the Operation of Public Administration and Public Services* (Bašić 2006), *Citizens of Serbia and Populism* (Lutovac and Bašić 2017),<sup>3</sup> and *Research of Implementation (Coordination and Monitoring) of the Strategy of Social*

<sup>3</sup> A separate part of the research was dedicated to the relationship towards “dangerous others” – national minorities, Roma, migrants (Lutovac and Bašić 2017: 51).

*Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for 2016-2025.*<sup>4</sup>

This indicates that the quantitative data – which allow us to identify the problems faced by members of national and ethnic minorities – should be additionally examined and explained in the context of qualitative data, which point to the nature, structure, and multi-layered configuration of the problems. Even though such a conclusion is also common when analysing research into other social groups and phenomena, when it comes to the study of ethnic relations and associated phenomena, it is also significant as it points to a permanent and methodological lack of examination and interpretation of the problems identified in quantitative research by means of qualitative methodology. The demographic data collected in the census and presented in statistical form are important in foreseeing trends, yet they are not sufficient to allow the planning, design, monitoring, and management of multiculturalism policies, the final aim of which is to protect and preserve identities. For example, let us assume that, based on demographic indicators, certain measures of economic policy may stop national minorities emigrating from the areas they traditionally inhabit. Even if this is the case, it still doesn't mean that the protection of their ethnic and cultural identity – which is highly

important for their societal security and life plans – has been provided.

It is methodologically important to strike a balance between the incongruous demands for the protection of ethnically sensitive data and the need for those data to be publicly represented. The personal data of national minorities' members should also be protected. This problem has been solved when it comes to general multicultural policy measures, yet in terms of affirmative measures that concern benefits in schooling, employment, social protection, and health insurance, or when entering people into special voter lists for the election of national minority councils, it is much harder – although not impossible – to put in place a mechanism for protecting such data. It remains uncertain why such data should be protected, since affirmative measures should, inter alia, reflect social solidarity and be a way for the most vulnerable people in society to overcome the causes of their social vulnerability. The need to protect data on nationality (ethnicity) is a reflection of the fear of diversity, i.e. of jeopardising libertarian principles in liberal societies. If people belonging to a national minority in a modern society are afraid of expressing their identity in public, then the policies of multiculturalism and democracy in general are indeed lacking. The trouble with the protection of personal data based on ethnicity is that this information can be concealed only in cases where national minority members' identity appears similar to the majority identity. However, it is more common that the language, skin col-

<sup>4</sup> The research was conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences in 2019 for the needs of the German Organization for International Cooperation (GIZ).

our, clothing, and even the cuisine of a minority group are substantially different from that of the majority population. In these cases, the effectiveness of the protection of personal data is limited, which raises suspicion that the policy is designed merely to calm the conscience of the public administration for its incapability to substantially address racism and xenophobia.

Last but not least among the problems we faced while writing this paper are the challenges that methodology and statistics professionals encounter when it comes to determining representative samples of minority populations when realising their empirical research. These include organising the in-person or online collection of ethnically sensitive data, creating appropriate instruments, and bridging language barriers. The root of the problems that occur in those situations lies in the fact that scientists of positivist orientation do not take into account the fact that there is no point in collecting data on ethnocultural identity outside the linguistic and cultural matrices in which those identities live. In support of that, it has been noted that the fact that there are 275 people of Aromanian origin living in Serbia has no bearing on demographic predictions, yet in the context of preserving this community's ethnocultural identity, this information is very important. In-depth research would probably reveal that there is a larger number of people in Serbia of Aromanian descent. Another example is the attitude of Roma women in Serbia towards the problem of domestic violence. Namely, for decades the prevention of violence against

women in Roma families was approached with measures similar to those used in the general population, yet research has shown that many Roma women accept violence as socially "justified," since 37% of women from Roma settlements believe that a husband/partner has the right to hit or beat his wife/partner for at least one of the five reasons offered as options in the research. Nearly one woman in three believes a husband's violence is justified in case the wife neglects their children (30%), while one woman in five justifies violence in case the wife demonstrates her independence, e.g. goes out without informing her husband (19%) or quarrels with him (21%). Refusal to have sex with one's husband constitutes a valid reason for violence in the opinion of 17% of Roma women, while 13% believe that violence is also justified if a woman burns a meal. It is more common for women who are currently married or live with their partner out of wedlock to agree with one of the five justifications for violence (41%) than divorcees or women who never married (27%) (UNICEF 2015). Public policies founded on such facts would have a more pronounced emancipatory role, yet the problem is that data containing qualitative information are rarely collected in national research projects. However, it should also be mentioned that the questionnaire of the distinguished European Sociological Survey (ESS) – which was implemented for the first time in the ninth research cycle of 2018 – contains but a few questions concerning the ethnicity (nationality) of the respondent, his/her

parents, and the languages he/she speaks (Filozofski fakultet Univerzitet u Beogradu 2018).

Finally, data on the nature of changes in multi-ethnic societies – especially those in which ethnic identities bear dominant importance in social and political relations – should be collected periodically in transversal and longitudinal surveys. Diversity management through socially responsible public policies requires permanent screening for the changes caused by certain policies and measures.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Serbia, the multicultural policy, i.e. a systematised set of legal, political, social, and other measures designed to protect and preserve the identities of different cultural groups, national and ethnic minorities being among them, is not clearly defined. Despite the fact that the constitutional protection of national minorities has been in development since 2002,<sup>5</sup> it remains unclear what its purpose is. The systematic collection of documents on national minorities adopted in the previous two decades by the National Assembly and the Government of the Republic of Serbia seemingly doesn't exist, yet based on data contained in authors' substantial personal archives, it may

be concluded that the goals of “minority” policies were rarely discussed prior to the adoption of legislative and constitutional provisions. Even when these discussions did take place, mainly in academic circles, no agreement was reached (Bašić 2006: 61–110; Stanovčić and Bašić 2016; Đurđević 2014; Vegel 1996: 313, Vasović 1996: 21). The exception is the First Report of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the Realisation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, submitted to the Council of Europe in 2002, which pointed to the foundations of the new minority policy: “Development of democratic institutions and respect of the rule of law; Building of comprehensive legal regulations in the domain of minority rights; Creation of a social environment in which a spirit of tolerance and respect of diversities is cultivated; Faster tempo of economic growth and development of the country” (Savezno ministarstvo nacionalnih i etničkih zajednica 2002: 15). However, not even these goals indicate the character of the national minority policy, i.e. whether the overall policy of multiculturalism would favour integration, segregation, assimilation, or some mixed form of social relations.

The Culture Strategy, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia in February 2020 after a long and heated public hearing, indirectly indicates that the national policy is inclined towards developing a monocultural political community, which is incongruous with the multi-ethnic nature of society. The Strategy defines

<sup>5</sup> See articles 14, 47, 49, 75-81 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (2006), followed by: Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities (2018); Law on National Councils of National Minorities (2018); Law on the Official Use of Language and Script (2018); Law on Local Self-Government (2018), etc.

“Serbian cultural core and cultural space, which does not include only the territory of the Serbian state, but also the locations in which Serbian people have left, throughout history, the traces of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, implying that thus Serbian cultural space overlaps with other spaces” (Ministarstvo kulture i informisanja 2020: 42). The Cultural Strategy’s lack of interest for ethnocultural diversity is not alleviated by its introductory sections, which indirectly refer to the holistic definition of the culture of the Republic of Serbia and indicate the importance of the cultures of national minorities.

To evidence the fact that the policy of multiculturalism in Serbia is in its nature inclined towards the monocultural model, the Constitution clearly defines the state as the political community of Serbian people and all the citizens living in it (Bašić 2018: 213), also stipulating that Cyrillic script is the only script of the Serbian language, even though Latin script is also widely used (Bugarski 2009: 114). Finally, despite the guarantees of minorities’ rights to have their identity protected, the Constitution at no point ideologically transcends tolerance as the principle of social attitudes towards minorities (article 81). Such positions suggest the state’s taciturn commitment to a segregationist policy towards multiculturalism. This decision – as well as many political decisions adopted based on impressions rather than facts – creates problems, many of which are very slow to be addressed. The gravity of such a decision lies in the fact that it implies that

minority ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities should be managed in a way that is not inherent to the multi-ethnic nature of the Serbian state. Serbia is indeed a multi-ethnic state that is officially home to 23 national minorities. Each of them, should they want to, has the right to express, preserve, and protect their national (ethnic) identity. Each of them has the right to feel as good in any part of the country as among their compatriots, while the state has the obligation to secure this, i.e. to eliminate any kind of discrimination based on national or ethnic status. Has this been secured, in spite of the reports made for years by the Commissioner for Protection of Equality? We do not know, as there is a lack of systematically collected data. Data regarding the representation of national minorities in public administration or the implementation of affirmative measures are also not collected, while the most evident is the lack of data concerning the implementation of the state program for the social inclusion of Roma people (Zaštitnik građana 2019).

In the aforementioned interviews with representatives of state and local authorities concerning research into the position and realisation of rights of national minorities over the past two years, there have been many references to the notion that data concerning national affiliation could not be collected due to an alleged prohibition contained in Article 47 of the Constitution. According to state authority respondents from a number of ministries responsible for legally and regularly implementing the public policies



and strategic measures of the Serbian Government, measures concerning the social inclusion of Roma people have not been implemented because in the context of the liberal principle of citizens' equality, it has not been possible to collect data on national affiliation, nor has it been viable for social and economic measures to be implemented for the benefit of a single national or ethnic group. However, Article 47 of the Constitution regulates the freedom of expression of national affiliation, i.e. instructs citizens that they are not obliged to declare their national affiliation. It doesn't say that such data must not be collected. In any case, during population censuses, such data are collected anyway. They are also collected by the National Employment Agency when implementing affirmative measures for the employment of Roma men and women. Therefore, this is not a problem of whether or not it's possible to collect ethnically sensitive data, but rather in what way and for what purpose such data are being and should be collected. It is crucial that anyone may, but is not obliged to, declare his/her national (ethnic) affiliation, and citizens should make such decisions freely without being forced to do so. Additionally, the purposes for which such data are being collected must be made clear to citizens. For example, during population censuses, information on nationality is collected in order to determine the ethnic structure of the population across different levels of territorial and political administration, allowing members of national minorities to realise certain rights (official use of language, educa-

tion etc.), or when realising their entitlement to certain benefits (affirmative measures) defined for national minorities that, due to cultural, economic, or social deprivation are unable to attain average living standards or protect their identity. Finally, data concerning the nationality of individuals must be adequately protected, used for the explicit purposes for which they have been collected, and kept in the prescribed way.

The issue of the collection and protection of ethnically sensitive data has been discussed within European administration, as well as among professionals engaging in empirical research (Ethmig Survey Data n.d.). The Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data (1995) and the General Data Protection Regulation (n.d.) – which was implemented in 2018 – prohibit the processing of personal data that reveal, inter alia, racial and ethnic origin, yet exceptions are allowed providing that those data are adequately protected and the people those data concern have given their explicit consent (Simon 2007). This is especially the case regarding data that facilitate the equality of opportunity or equal standing for members of autochthonous minorities and migrants. Social, political, and historical circumstances influence access to data concerning personal identity, since while in the states with long liberal traditions it is commonly believed that ethnic affiliation is a dynamic category ascribed to one's own personal choice, in states where the

political culture is based on a collective identity, ethnicity is perceived as an objective, congenitally rooted fact. It is important, when organising research concerning ethnicity, to realise that self-identification, i.e. the freedom of choosing one's identity, represents the soundest methodological approach. In this sense, one should bear in mind the fact that ethnic identity can be limitrophe or multiple and, respecting this fact, one should offer citizens the chance to declare themselves accordingly and to live in line with the traditions and customs that they feel are their own, rather than those externally imposed on them.

In the context of the previous thesis on multiple identities, it should be emphasised that the system of protection and realisation of national minorities' rights in Serbia is regulated so that it strongly favours the monolithic nature of ethnic identities. According to the Law on National Councils of National Minorities, when electing a minority self-government (national council of a national minority), members of the national minority are entered into separate voter lists and thus declare their national (ethnic) affiliation. Members of national minorities with multiple ethnic identities must opt for only one option. Thus the freedom of choice is limited and the rule of self-identification, which the Framework Convention proposes as the foundation of minority rights, is compromised. The freedom of self-identification implies the right of every individual, respecting objective criteria, to declare his/her affiliation to one or more ethnic groups and to ex-

pect the protection of his/her identity under the Framework Convention on the basis of that declaration. In this sense, multiple identities are perceived in the context of integrating minorities into wider public life. In Thematic Comment no. 4 on the Scope of Application of the Framework Convention, it is clearly indicated that: "Persons belonging to national minorities should never be obliged to choose between preserving their minority identity or claiming the majority culture, as both options must be fully available to them. This implies that practices by which an individual affiliates with a particular minority should not be seen as exclusive, as he or she may simultaneously identify with other minorities or with the majority. In some instances, such a choice may be the consequence of previous assimilation processes into the majority or into another dominant minority. However, this must not be used as an argument against the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to self-identify freely and to claim minority protection" (Council of Europe 2016: 8).

Collection of data on ethnic affiliation is always voluntary and members of national minorities are not expected to always self-identify in the same way, so in population censuses and other data collection initiatives, questions regarding ethnic identity should be open-ended and allow answers declaring multiple identities. The aforementioned Thematic Comment indicates the following: "Given the importance attached in some state parties to the size of a minority popu-

lation for access to minority rights, multiple affiliations must also not only be recorded but also adequately processed, analysed and displayed. These considerations on the collection, processing and reporting of data must also be applied to other situations (for example school enrolment) that can imply self-identification” (Council of Europe 2016: 9).

In the 2011 population census in Serbia, data on multiple ethnic identity and multilingualism were collected, yet their potential was not used for the development of integrative multiculturalism. In public policies, bilingualism in education is planned and managed by teaching the mother tongue, usually the majority Serbian language, and a foreign language, usually English. In the education system, the languages spoken by national minorities – which comprise an important segment of their identity and the identity of the local areas in which they are spoken, and are also agents of social integration – are accessible mainly to members of national minorities. What’s more, education and the official use of national minority languages are among the competencies that are partly delegated to the national councils of national minorities, which are, according to the Regulation on the Criteria for the Allocation of Funds from the Budget of the Republic of Serbia for the Financing of the Operation of National Councils of National Minorities (2019), given fewer points if they cultivate bilingualism. Representatives of national councils, and also more and more members of national minorities, believe bilingualism

to be an obstacle to the preservation of minority ethnocultural identities. Bearing in mind that younger generations of Hungarian and Albanian national minorities, being educated in their mother tongues, leave the education system without sufficient knowledge of Serbian language to allow them to integrate socially, one might reasonably assume that the Serbian policy of multiculturalism is seriously flawed. However, given that there are no quantitative data, these claims, though obviously true, cannot be proven. On the contrary, the quantitative data provided by the competent state and provincial authorities refute these claims, since instruction within the education system is available in all languages, and this fact is supported by data – number of students, number of schools and classes in which instruction is organised, etc. (Ministarstvo prosvete nauke i tehnološkog razvoja 2017).

When it comes to the collection and use of ethnically sensitive data, it’s important to carefully note the number and distribution of the members of national (ethnic) minorities within a certain territory. In Thematic Comment no. 4 on the Scope of Application of the Framework Convention, states are advised not to limit minorities’ access to rights because they are dispersed thinly across a large area or their number is small, and that the limitation of rights in the context of territory is regulated by articles 10(2), 11(3), and 14(2). Territorial limitations are, as a rule, exclusions of those members of national minorities who don’t live in an area traditionally in-

habited by their compatriots, i.e. in which centres of minority cultures and their institutions are concentrated. Such differences condition weaker cohesion within the minority community, as well as limited access to rights. In this respect, it's important to take into account "natural" migration events, which see the members of national minorities resettling from the centres they have traditionally inhabited to other regions within the state, which should not drastically limit their right to have their ethnocultural identity protected. The realisation of these rights should not be conditioned by numerical criteria, yet there are examples in Serbia of such limitations. These include limitations on the right of Roma people to officially use their language if they constitute less than 15% of the population of a local self-government unit (LSGU), as well as the right of Aromanians to minority self-government due to a failure to fulfil the conditions in article 44 of the Law on National Councils of National Minorities, which stipulates that the establishment of a separate voter list for national council elections requires at least 300 adult citizens. The most important limitation relates to the election and organisation of minority self-governments only on the national level, which does not favour members of national minorities who are widely dispersed (Bašić and Marković 2018).

It has been mentioned that the issue of the number and distribution of minority populations, which in its nature is sensitive, is monitored during population censuses, while there are no data to account for changes in the

periods between censuses. This is significant, as indicated by comparing data from three previous censuses (1991, 2002, and 2011). According to the 2011 population census, only the members of the Bosniak, Hungarian, and Roma national minorities accounted for more than 1% of the total population of Serbia – Hungarians made up 3.53%, Bosniaks 2.02%, and Roma 2.05% of the country's population. However, while there were almost 40,000 more Roma and 9,000 more Bosniaks than in the previous census, the number of Hungarians, who mainly inhabit the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, fell by almost 40,000. During the same period, the number of Croats fell by 13,000, the number of Slovaks by 7,000, and the number of Romanians by 5,000. Insignificant increases were identified in the number of Ashkali (413), Gorani (3,186), Greek (153), Egyptians (1,020), Germans (163), Russians (659), and Turks (125). The percentage of these national minorities in the overall population of Serbia ranges from 0.01% for Ashkali and Greek to 0.1% for Gorani. It should be noted that members of the Albanian national minority inhabiting the municipalities of Bujanovac, Medveđa, and Preševo did not respond to the 2011 census, and the decrease in the number of Albanians in Serbia from 61,647 in 2002 to 5,809 in 2011 was not conditioned by demographic factors. Non-demographic factors also influenced the increase in the number of Bosniaks, since the increase in the number of Bosniaks in Serbia was offset by a

fall of approximately the same extent in the number of Muslims.

Experts raised concerns about the trend of the depopulation of national minorities between 1991 and 2002. Negative population growth was at the core of national minorities' depopulation trends even then; in that period, the number of births exceeded the number of deaths only in the Albanian, Bosniak, and Roma national minorities (Penev 2004: 2). When compared to the pre-conflict year of 1991, the situation is even more unfavourable, since at the time as many as 176,415 (2.3%) Bosniaks and Muslims lived in Serbia, as well as 26,418 (0.3%) Bulgarians, 21,360 (0.3%) Bunjevci, 94,245 (0.9%) Croats, 337,479 (4.5%) Hungarians, 44,034 (0.6%) Macedonians, 37,818 (0.5%) Romanians, 17,795 (0.2%) Rusyns, and 65,365 (0.9%) Slovaks. Only the numbers of Roma 91,075 (1.2%) and Vlachs 15,675 (0.2%) increased between 1991 and 2011. The sudden surge in the numbers of Roma and Vlachs after 2002 was mainly caused by non-demographic factors, i.e. the "awakening" of identity among the members of the Vlach minority and the inflow of a significant number of Roma refugees from the territories of former Yugoslavia, especially from Kosovo and Bosnia.

It is important to note the decades-long incongruence between official national statistics and estimates of the number of Roma people. Namely, the data of 2002 census recorded 108,193 members of the Roma national minority, while results acquired in the study entitled *Roma Settlement, Living Con-*

*ditions and the Chances for Integration of Roma in Serbia* established that there were 593 Roma settlements in Serbia with populations of more than 100 people or more than 15 families. There were also 201,353 indigenous Roma and 46,238 Roma displaced from Kosovo (Jakšić and Bašić 2005: 32). The problem of the lack of data concerning the number of Roma – especially concerning the effects of the measures of their social and economic integration – is highly complex. In the research project entitled *Developing the Methodology for Monitoring the Implementation of Roma Policies* realised by the Institute of Social Sciences in 2017, it was concluded that the manner in which the data on implementation of strategic measures are collected is illogical and unclear. Focus groups organised as part of the study indicated the flaws in the collection of data concerning social inclusion measures in LSGUs, i.e. that the data are collected in a provisory way without uniform methodology, that many LSGUs do not enter them into the database, etc. Data collected in this haphazard way by state authorities in cooperation with the EU project *Roma Integration 2020*, implemented by the Regional Council for Cooperation (RCC), have for years been used as the basis of state progress reports. After the adoption of the Law on the Planning System of the Republic of Serbia (Zakon o planskom sistemu Republike Srbije 2018),<sup>6</sup> which orders public administration authorities to plan and implement strategic measures

<sup>6</sup> See point: 5.3.1.2.

in accordance with the results of the *ex-post* analysis of the effects of public policies, i.e. based on factual data, the manner in which public authorities collect data and report on the implementation of strategic measures has become both irregular and illegal.

Contrary to this approach, the European Union collects ethnic data for a range of purposes and in line with differing methodologies, which makes them unreliable. Thus the European Commission, in its attempts to address the trend of growing racism, stimulates scientific institutes (GESIS n.d.) and projects (Ethmig Survey Data n.d.) in an effort to harmonise research methodology and create a common set of indicators, especially when it comes to employment and housing for “vulnerable” minority groups such as Roma, migrants, Muslims, and various populations of African descent (EU Open data portal 2015).

Supporting the discussion on widening the demographic approach to data is the position the UN rightly advocates for: data, including those concerning ethnicity, must be based on human rights – a Human Rights-Based Approach to Data (HRBAD), which should contribute to the relevance of the statistical data pertinent to monitoring and realising the millennial goals. The principles upon which the HRBAD is founded include the desegregation of data, self-identification, transparency, privacy, and responsibility. These principles are oriented towards recognising people’s identities based on racial, ethnic, and religious affiliation, gender, sex, and sexual orientation, age, disability,

civil and property status, or the specific status of being a refugee or migrant.

Participation implies that representatives of the groups that are subject to the research participate in all phases of data collection (planning, identification of data needs, selection and testing of the methodology, field collection, control and safekeeping of data, analysis and presentation of the results). The choice of community representatives involved in the research must be open, public, and just, and exceptions in their participation in the research are possible only when the consequences of stigmatisation and negative stereotyping are such that they compromise the purpose of their participation. The participation of members of the marginalised group in the process of “working” on the data facilitates an increase in the statistical literacy of the community, their education when it comes to the importance and power of data, and, finally, an increase in the responsibility of the group. The importance of the HRBAD lies in the fact that it insists on the desegregation of statistics on the basis of gender, i.e. on the relations between men and women based on socially and culturally founded identities.

The desegregation of data, which official statistics do not insist on, enables the comparison of data according to their different characteristics, which contributes to a more in-depth understanding of the position and problems of the group the research focuses on. By using this method, one obtains data and makes conclusions about inequality relating to marginalised and minori-

ty groups that could otherwise remain hidden among national statistics. The collection of desegregated data requires a different manner of sampling, improvements in research methodology, different sets of specific indicators, the creation of sensitive research instruments, and the development of software that enables the electronic storage of data and their multiple cross-sectioning. The desegregation of data from national statistics allows researchers to gain an overview of the differences in personal characteristics across planes (sex, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.). In the context of Serbia's Roma population, desegregated data could not only identify forms of discrimination and consequences of inequality, but also help determine their real magnitude.

The importance of self-identification was referred to in the context of Article 3 of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities, yet when it comes to access to the data based on human rights, we should reiterate that self-identification constitutes an approach in which every respondent is granted full-fledged freedom in perceiving his/her identity, as well as the right of whether or not to declare it. The principle of self-identification is based on respect for personal dignity and is in synergy with the desegregation of data. It also enables the perception of multiple dimensions of social statuses, inequality, and discrimination. In data collection, national statistics often don't pay attention to the importance of self-identification, as they allow those realising the censuses or polls to

enter data on personality into census sheets or questionnaires at their own discretion. In the context of human rights, such a practice is unacceptable. It is also expected that, during data collection, those providing data will be protected against any kind of harm (Farkas 2017: 9).

Transparency, i.e. the public availability of data, is based on the fact that official statistics in democratic societies form the foundations of public policy and economic planning, while also being a source of information from citizens about vital economic and social trends. Data based on human rights – which may concern access to healthcare, education, drinking water, etc. – are included, or should be included, in the information revealed by official statistics. Members of the public, especially professionals, are also interested in information concerning metadata and paradata, which point to structures and processes. Finally, the public character of data also assumes that they can be understood by minority groups in the languages they use, such as national minority languages, but also sign language and Braille, etc.

The protection of confidential data concerning the identities of respondents stems fundamentally from UN standards (United Nations 1966) and implies that such data should be collected with the express consent of the respondent and may be used only for statistical purposes, i.e. the identity of individual respondents must remain "hidden" from the public. The fact that identity data needs to be specially protected and expressed indicates that the situation pertaining to human

rights across the world is not good, and it creates space for other ethical, philosophical, political, and legal discussions that may be useful for demography.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that modern societies, affected by the waves of populism and crises of democracy (Lutovac 2020: 23), perceive ethnicity as a force for mobilising “the people”, one should bear in mind that ethnic identity is a personal characteristic. People are born in ethnic, linguistic, and cultural environments, and this usually has a defining effect on the formation of their personal and group attitudes and positions. However, in the modern world, people are much more open towards their own identity, and through education and communication – which have become almost universally available thanks to technological advances – are also much more inclined to examine the values and limits of ethnicity. About half a century ago, Frederik Barth opened the discussion on the permeability of ethnic borders, which influenced the awakening of forgotten ethnic identities. In Serbia, these include Vlachs, Bunjevci, Aromanians, Šokci. Barth also shone light on people’s self-identification as “possessors” of two or more ethnic identities, or their complete renouncement of their primary ethnicity as an element of their identity and acceptance of wider identities (those based on living in Srem, Šumadija, Vojvodina, Europe, the Balkans, or Yugoslavia, or other Slav-

ic identities). Even in liberal states, in which ethnicity has long merged with civil and state identities, and national statistics have thus accepted methodologies in which data on ethnic origin are not collected, people are increasingly aware of the Catalan, Basque, Flemish, Occitan, Breton, Scottish, Irish, and other identities.

In the European ethnic mosaic and the myriad of autochthonous majority and minority identities, there are more and more newcomers from former European colonies, as well as refugees and economic migrants from countries in Africa and Asia. Many members of these ethnic and religious groups are culturally different and have values that differ from the European system, while the policies of their integration require data on the type and characteristics of the newcomers’ identities. Despite the fact that British experts and statesmen have criticised both European and British concepts of multiculturalism, Great Britain has not neglected the multiple significance and specificity of its multi-ethnicity. Trying, for the benefit of public policies and society, to offer precise data on the ethnicity (nationality) of the citizens of Great Britain, the methodology was developed within a wide circle of interlocutors, which is adapted to the specific characteristics of ethnic identities. Prior to the 2011 census, the concept of ethnicity was re-examined in Scotland, and the research showed that for some people, nationality is the dominant factor in their ethnic identity, while others highlighted their country of birth, country of birth of their parents, herit-



age, language, place of residence, or a combination of a number of factors. It is evident that there are differing opinions about what ethnic identity represents, coming from one or a number of different groups, and that no individual concept has been identified as the final component of ethnic identity, which is often multiple, complex, subjective, and requires the reconceptualisation of established definitions (General Register Office for Scotland 2008). Similar analyses were made in Northern Ireland, where four types of ethnicity in the autochthonous population are distinguished: Irish, Irish who connect their identity to Northern Ireland, Irish with an affinity to British ethnicity, and travellers (Zenker 2016: 237). The importance of ethnically based data for “good governance” became obvious when considering the consequences caused by Brexit (Soares 2016: 836). With the awareness that ethnicity in all its dimensions is an important factor in planning development and the functioning of state and society, Great Britain has launched an initiative to harmonise its methodology in expressing ethnic identity during censuses and other research, with the additional purpose of including as many modalities of ethnicity as possible (Office for National Statistics 2016, 2017).

To give up on collecting ethnic data in national censuses and state statistics is understandable, since it is hard to define an ethnic group; ethnic affiliation means different things to different people and is often influenced by different political concepts. Liberal states as a rule renounce ethnicity and reli-

gion in their public sphere, yet they continue to collect data on ethnic structures for a range of purposes and based on different perceptions of the essence of ethnicity (Morning 2015: 17). The global liberal library is rich in volumes on ethnicity and multiculturalism.

The policy of multiculturalism in Serbia resembles a pantry that has for a long time stored samples of good food but in a negligent way; everything seems to be there, but it's either out of place or spoilt. Nobody is satisfied with the current inarticulate policy of multiculturalism. The solution lies in the collection of verified data concerning various aspects of Serbian multi-ethnicity, ranging from those pertaining to citizens' value judgments to those that help realise the specific rights of national minorities and measure the effects of active policies.

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# Nedostatak etnički osetljivih podataka u politici multikulturalizma u Srbiji

GORAN BAŠIĆ<sup>1</sup> | ZORAN LUTOVAC<sup>1</sup>

## SAŽETAK

Međunarodne organizacije čija tela prate ostvarivanje i zaštitu prava nacionalnih i etničkih manjina (Savet Evrope, Ujedinjene nacije) izrazile su zabrinutost zbog nedostatka podataka u izveštajima Republike Srbije o zaštiti prava nacionalnih manjina i uputile su odgovarajuće preporuke kako bi se stanje popravilo. Na tragu tih zapažanja u radu se razmatraju nedostaci politike multikulturalnosti Srbije. Osnovni nalaz da srbijanska politika multikulturalizma nije zasnovana na verifikovanim i merljivim podacima produbljen je ukazivanjem na principe i metodologije prikupljanja podataka zasnovanih na etničkom i nacionalnom identitetu. U radu se kroz različite primere, ukazuje na društvene probleme koji nastaju zbog zanemarivanja prikupljanja podataka o etnicitetu građana i razmatra se na nužnost interdi-

sciplinarnosti prilikom njihovog prikupljanja. Holistički pristup istraživanjima etniciteta podrazumeva korišćenje, ne samo demografskih metoda, već i metoda i znanja drugih društvenih i humanističkih nauka. U prilog ideji da bi pristup etnički osetljivim podacima trebalo zasnovati holistički je i stanovište Ujedinjenih nacija da podaci koji proizilaze iz identiteta ljudi moraju biti zasnovani na ljudskim pravima (HRBAD), jer se na taj način doprinosi većoj relevantnosti statističkih podataka.

## KLJUČNE REČI

eticitet | podaci | identitet | ljudska prava | Srbija

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<sup>1</sup> Centar za politička istraživanja i javno mnjenje, Institut društvenih nauka, Beograd (Srbija)

