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**Diversity Management and  
Concepts of Multiculturalism in Russia**

**Policy Paper**

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## **Introduction**

Even after fifteen years of social, economic and political transformation in Russia, we have not met our aspirations on elimination of the so-called 'national question' in the country. Recently the structure of the 'national question' and the reasons for ethnic tensions have been significantly changed. From one hand, an existence of one's multiple identity in contrast to a single identity known as 'soviet people' has become less questionable. However, from the other hand, the ways of accommodation of ethnic and cultural diversity have not been developed in a clear manner.

An urgent need for seeking the ways to manage diversity and to develop a more appropriate ethno-policy in Russia has been articulated in a number of official documents and programmes, including the Programme for Promotion of Tolerance and Improving Interethnic Relations in Russia, sponsored by the European Union and a renewed Concept of the National Ethno-Policy of the Russian Federation developed by the group of the leading scholars of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences under the supervision of Dr. Valery Tishkov. Recently, the concept of multiculturalism has been incorporated into the ethno-policy agenda in Russia. However, ethno-policy is not just a matter of terms and concepts, it is much more a matter of understanding, adopting and applying of the meaning of these concepts to real life in Russia.

Comprehension of multiculturalism in Russia requires civil servants and bureaucrats to take an active part in promoting ethnic diversity in society and in developing public attitudes to diversity and multiculturalism. It is necessary to understand, that being responsible for decision making and for implementation of the policies launched, civil servants have power to intensify and popularize policies, or on the contrary, to slow down them. What strategy they will choose depends on how they perceive and accept 'nationality question' and ethnic diversity personally and on professional basis.

## **Terminology**

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify some of the terminology and main concepts used in the present policy paper.

Since its appearance a few decades ago, the term 'multiculturalism' has come to encompass a wide variety of viewpoints. Both as a concept and in relation to policy initiatives, 'multiculturalism' in general remains an intensely contested term, meaning different things to different people (Harris, 2001; Weviorka, 1998; Joppke, 1999; Modood, 2001). For example,

The Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnic Studies (2004) gives the following amount of multiculturalism:

‘The concept of multiculturalism is broad and contested, although the ideal of the harmonious coexistence of different cultural, ethnic, national or indigenous groups within a complex society remains at its core however it is specifically defined’ (Todd, 2004: 289-90).

The debates on multiculturalism vary from supporting the conceptual bases of a multicultural perspective to focusing on specific needs, services, and policies related to a multicultural population. For the purpose of the research resulted in the present policy paper I have adopted the understanding of multiculturalism in the way Bhikhu Parekh puts it (2000a: 7):

‘The term ‘multicultural’ refers to the fact of cultural diversity, the term ‘multiculturalism’ to a normative response to that fact’.

According to Bhikhu Parekh, I tend to distinguish between the multicultural diversity of the society and multiculturalism as a policy, aiming to find a way to preserve discrete ethnic identities. The salient characteristic of multiculturalism is respect and appreciation for differences that lead to added value and representation of all cultures. Hence, among the main principles of multiculturalism are equal opportunities for all citizens, social inclusion, and understanding and respect of ethnic and cultural diversity.

In order to practice multiculturalism, the multicultural society

‘needs a broadly shared culture to sustain it. Since it involves several cultures, the shared culture can only grow out of their interaction and should both respect their diversity and unite them around a common way of life. For those accustomed to thinking of culture as a more or less homogeneous and coherent whole, the idea of a multiculturally constituted culture might appear incoherent or bizarre. In fact, such a culture is a fairly common phenomenon in every culturally diverse society’ (Parekh, 2000a: 219).

In other words, cultural diversity is the fact, and multiculturalism is what we do with the fact.

Cultural and ethnic diversity is not a new phenomenon, and social theorists have developed many approaches illustrating different contact situations, modes of social distance, and barriers that may occur (Alba, 1990; Davis, 2000; Kivisto, 1995; Parekh, 2000a). I suggest to use the terms ‘nationality’ and ‘ethnicity’ as interchangeable ones in this paper, as in the Russian tradition ‘national’ as well as ‘multinational’ refers to the category of ‘ethnicity’, rather than to the notion of citizenship and nationhood. Along with other cultural identities, as gender, age, sexual orientation, and physical abilities, ethnicity serves as a core category for multiculturalism with its concentration on appreciation and respect for different cultures.

At the same time in the former soviet tradition the issue of cultural diversity mainly meant to the soviet people an ethnic diversity. It happened because other types of cultural diversity – namely, urban versus rural differences, socio-economic class differences – were seen as alien elements to the soviet and communist ideology and the state proclaimed those differences eliminated by late sixties. Sexual and gender differences were not officially considered to be significant for society development. Age diversity was not also seen as a social problem, moreover youth and elderly people were considered as “privileged social classes” protected and valued by the state and its policies. That is why ethnic understanding of diversity has got the most important consideration in the present paper. Ethnic/nationality differences were traditionally seen in the primordial manner in the Soviet Union, and nowadays this situation still remains mainly unchangeable.

## **Methods**

The qualitative study of the concept of multiculturalism and diversity management in the civil service in Russia was based on in-depth interviews conducted with the senior civil servants from the regional government departments in the cities of Saratov and Perm.

At the outset of the research, the main assumptions were that through the interviews it would be possible to achieve an understanding of how multiculturalism could have been perceived, characterized, developed and practiced within the institution of the civil service in both regions. It was also anticipated that the professional and personal experiences of the respondents, who were specifically involved in decision making with regard to diversity issues within certain departments, would probably offer an invaluable insight into the matters I was interested in.

Choosing the civil service as a target institution for the research on multiculturalism, I was guided by a number of reasons. The first is that the civil service is responsible for providing a wide range of services to citizens; therefore it addresses the vast majority of the population. The second reason is that in democratic societies the civil service is expected to express the public's interests rather than the interests of elite groups. Thirdly, the civil service reflects the national government's policies. Therefore, if accepted and practiced in the civil service system, multiculturalism could also be considered to be an accepted state response to society's diversity in general.

The civil service is the centre of public administration – and public administration is about how society is governed. That means that if the principles of multiculturalism are in the very fabric of the civil service, that may indicate that multicultural principles are also highly valued in the public administration and the state as well. This in turn makes it possible to assume that multiculturalism is shared by both citizens and governments. My assumption therefore is that if multiculturalism works within the civil service, which is the centre of public administration, it could be said that civil society and government institutions benefit from multiculturalism and that multiculturalism should be developed within a diverse society and

within the civil service itself. This finally would probably help the civil service to achieve higher efficacy of the institution, in other words – to increase its ability to achieve its own goals.

If multicultural principles are not likely to be seen as suitable for the civil service and hence for public administration, then arguably something must be done to change the performance of the civil service in order to meet multicultural principles. Obviously multiculturalism is a challenge for the civil service and public administration; being successfully applied in the civil service, it can also attain success in society as a whole.

In order to analyze the impact multiculturalism could have had on the institution of the civil service in Russia, a three-level model of the civil service as an institution has been utilized (Perry, 1989; Bekke and Perry, 1996; Perry and Thomson, 2004):

- 1) operational level;
- 2) governance level; and
- 3) performance level.

Each level looks at the institution of the civil service from a different angle. The *operational level* refers to the civil service as *personnel systems*. In this case the civil service is widely associated with *personnel systems* or the systems of employment. As such, civil service systems are typically the primary means for staffing the administrative organs of the state. Hence, the functioning of the civil service as *personnel systems* can be described mainly by recruitment, selection, and promotion processes, as well as in terms of training and development practices.

Therefore, in the context of the present policy development project, it is needed to study how multiculturalism affects those processes and practices related to the civil service as a *personnel system*. That led to the following lines of enquiry used in the interviews:

- What are the recruitment procedures within the department and how do they cover ethnic diversity?
- What do a selection/promotion processes in a department look like, and how do they reflect diversity and multiculturalism?
- How do the training and professional development programmes for the civil servants develop their diversity awareness and build their diversity competence?
- How does diversity in the workforce influence an organizational culture and a work place environment within the institution of civil service?

The *governance level* or the *collective choice* level refers to collective decisions, which are made by officials to determine, enforce, continue, or alter actions authorized within institutional arrangements (Kiser and Ostrom, 1982: 208). The two main functions of the modern civil service are being realized at this level. These functions are ‘to advise government ministers on policy matters and to make decisions in the name of their ministers’ (Pilkington, 1999:2).

In other words, at the governance level the nature of the tasks performed by civil servants on a daily basis is mainly reflected. At this level of the institution of civil service, I was particularly interested in the type of collective decisions that were involved in civil service reform and issues of community cohesion. Also, another significant issue related to the

governance level concerned the role the civil service played in practicing multicultural policies and promoting anti-discrimination legislation.

The lines of enquiry for this level were the following:

- What national legislation provides a framework for multiculturalism and diversity in the civil service?
- How does the department keep in touch with ethnic communities and their leaders, and are these contacts maintained on a regular or occasional basis?
- Does the current stage of the civil service reform deal with the multicultural/diversity context?

*The performance level* refers to the civil service as a *symbol system*. It takes into account the organizational values that are shared by the majority of the civil servants. It also refers to the civil service as a public institution, which symbolizes the link between the citizens and the state. It is also at the performance level where civil servants may feel either proud of themselves as professionals or unconfident, not being able to perform highly professional and competent in carrying out their functions.

The performance level of the civil service, which in its evolution gives rise to myths and symbols that have become instruments of an interpretive order, also often attracts rather careful public interest and judgment. Therefore, the *performance* of the civil service can produce a positive or negative attitude on the part of citizens, including the civil servants themselves, and can be an efficient tool for attracting resources, making changes in the salary scale and maintaining the legitimacy of the mechanisms of governance (Bekke and Perry, 1996). Hence, in connection with the present policy development project, I was curious about the impressions the civil servants had of the civil service as a diverse and multicultural institution and what they thought about multiculturalism in the civil service in Russia.

The lines of enquiries for the *performance level* were:

- What are the civil servants' attitudes and values regarding multiculturalism?
- Do civil servants see the civil service as a really multicultural institution?
- Is it necessary for the civil service to be diverse and what are the pros and cons?

Investigating the presence/or absence of diversity on the three levels of the institution of civil service in Russia has enabled also to make some suggestions on whether it is a 'diversity friendly' or 'multiculturalism friendly' institution based on the data collected.

### **Choosing the Target Departments and Gaining Access to Them**

At the outset of the research process I was aware, based on my experience gained from the initial communication with the regional government departments in Perm and Saratov, that I would need to overcome some barriers in getting access to the research sites.

In general, the difficulties I had been anticipating were similar in both regions. First of all, it was rather difficult to find a perfect respondent for the interview bearing in mind the terms and conditions of the study, and this problem was more obvious in Russia. This was because there were no civil servants within the regional government holding specific responsibilities

linked to diversity issues. Second, it was not easy to find contact details and establish personal contact with a prospective interviewee. Third, I had to fit into respondents' usually extremely busy schedule and ask for at least one-hour interview time. Finally, it was important to acquire a permission to record the interview.

It turned out to be quite difficult to access the bureaucrats in the regional governments, even though I was able to rely on my personal ties and contacts with the government employees and my teaching positions at the Volga Region Academy for Civil Service (in the city of Saratov) and at Perm State Technical University (in the city of Perm).

To begin with, it is necessary to mention that the senior civil servants in the regions are not accustomed to the role of the interviewee and in general do not feel comfortable being interviewed by academics. The organizational culture of the government departments remains rather reserved and is not ready for open discussions.

However in the case of this particular study the following reason seems more serious and influential: the topic of the research project appeared to be unpopular and complicated, so that the civil servants were not willing to talk about it.

The third obstacle I faced was that of choosing "the right people" as interviewees, because diversity management could not be considered as a responsibility of anyone particular from the regional government departments.

Finally, the list of criteria for choosing departments for the interviews in Perm and Saratov regions has appeared as follows: I was looking for the largest departments; the departments where the head of the department belongs to a minority ethnic group; the departments which happened to be responsible for a number of issues closely connected to ethnicity and nationality problems.

According to the criteria mentioned above, the following regional government departments in Perm and Saratov were chosen:

- The Civil Service and Personnel Management Office (the city of Saratov)
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Development (the city of Saratov)
- The Ministry of the Youth Policy (the city of Saratov)
- The Department of Labour and Social Policy (the city of Perm)
- The Administrative Office of the Governor of the city of Perm
- The Department of Education (the city of Perm)
- The Legal Department (the city of Perm)

The first series of the interviews in the Saratov region took place in August 2006, the second – in September 2006, the third – in November 2006. In the Perm region the periods for interviewing were June 2006, February and March 2007.

In the chosen departments, participants occupied main, leading or senior positions within the civil service system have been targeted.

The two regions were chosen as the research sites, namely, the Saratov and Perm regions. In so far as I was born, grew up and have been pursuing my professional career in different periods of my life in these regions, I know that both of them appear to be significantly diverse,

but at the same time have not been listed among the regions influenced by ethnic tensions and conflicts between members of different national groups. This particular factor is considered to be an important one, as a potential region-specific conflict would amount to a disadvantage for the present research project. Such a dispute would have inevitably biased the process of the study, as well as its results and conclusions. As Young has emphasized (1998),

‘in the situation under the cultural frictions, tensions and violence, the focus of diversity management and governance in multiethnic societies is shifted in the necessity to overcome ethnic conflicts. The urgent framework is not normal therefore’ (Young, 1998: xi).

The regional government is more likely to be interested in finding ways of prevention and the ‘therapy of accommodation’ rather than in the investigation of the ‘pathology of conflict’ (Young, 1998: xi). Therefore, in my research I wanted ethnic diversity to produce ‘instructive lessons’ that would help the policies to be proactive rather than reactive as a response to violence and conflicts. In order to do that, the non-conflict, non-biased by significant ethnic tensions regions have been chosen as the study’s framework.

### **Data Collection**

During the fieldwork I collected data primarily through in-depth interviews, by using written documents, reports and official online information on the regional government departments’ web-sites. The majority of data collected in Perm and Saratov came from the period between June 2006 and March 2007. All in all 51 interviews with senior civil servants in Russia were conducted, 15 of which took place in the city of Saratov and 36 in the city of Perm.

One interesting observation from the field research experience could be added here. As I started interviewing people in Perm and Saratov I was really excited and thought that my ability to tell the respondents about the international experience of multiculturalism as I had experienced it in my previous research career, would certainly be an advantage and would allow me to arouse their interest in the topic, which seemed to me extremely attractive and thought-provoking in itself.

But reality turned out to be exactly the opposite. While I was preparing for the interviews I decided to discuss my research idea with my colleagues in Saratov and Perm. All of them were united in the opinion that addressing the Western experience might create a barrier with the respondents and might prevent them from approaching my questions positively and from being sincere, open and objective.

Later during the interviews I tried to ‘play the Western card’ anyway just to test if the guess of my colleagues was true. In fact, every time I mentioned the Western experience of dealing with multiculturalism I was exposed to earlier, they became suspicious and defensive. Unfortunately, as I see it, this fact just proves that the myth of the constant East – West confrontation rooted in the times of the Cold War is still alive, although much weaker and less popular.



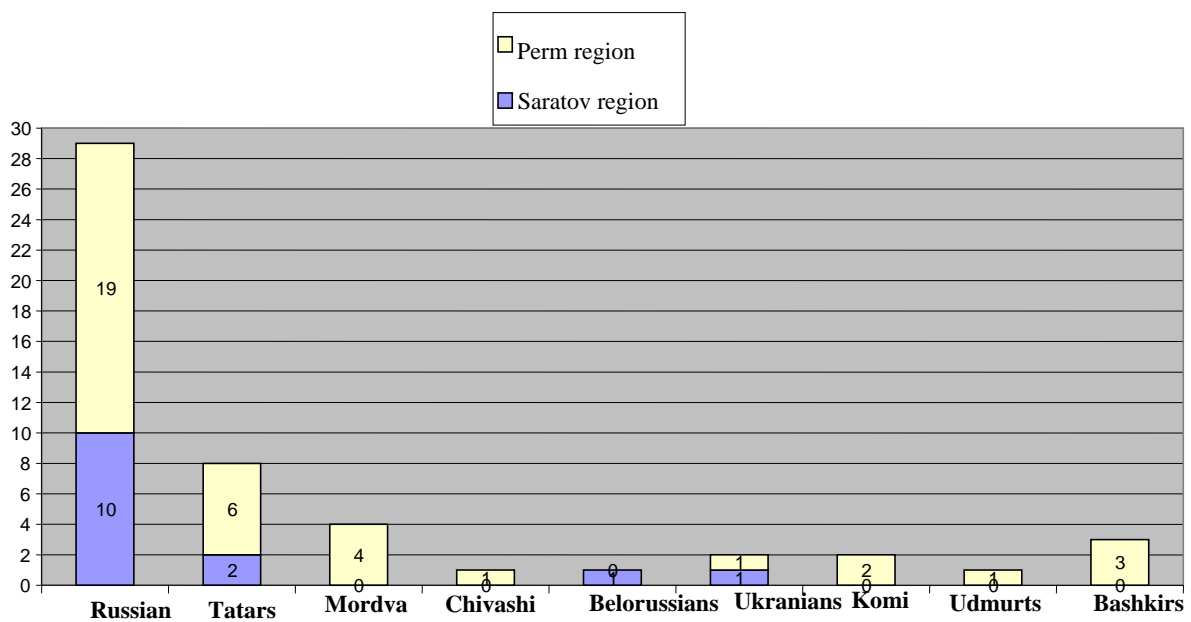
It is still rather difficult for the modern civil servants in Russia to think about the foreign experience in diversity management at least neutrally. The primary reaction I got from a number of the respondents might be described as a desire to reject completely any ideas originating from the West or to insist that each and every approach to the ‘nationality question’ we have in Russia is undoubtedly and unconditionally better than any foreign strategy and that we do not need any advice from the West.

What really amazed me was the similarity in the attitudes of the elderly and the younger generations of the civil servants. I could read in their eyes and through their statements that they tended to think about me as a pro-Western, probably not very patriotic person. Moreover, both fairly young and older respondents adhered to the position that it would be wiser not to make this question the centre of public and civil service staff interest and to speak about it very discreetly. However, this constituted just one part of the issue. As I continued with my questions, respondents showed greater passion, interest and commitment to the subject. So it turned out that in order to gain the trust of the respondents it was better not to address the Western example frequently, but just to mention the idea of multiculturalism in general where appropriate. On the whole, the respondents in the regions took my research seriously; they were ready to express their positions and seemed sincere in their views, even though sometimes they were constrained a bit and obviously were not feeling comfortable speaking on the issues of diversity.

The breakdown of the respondents from the Russian sample by nationality and region can be seen at the bar chart below.

Diagram 1

**Respondents in the regions by nationality**

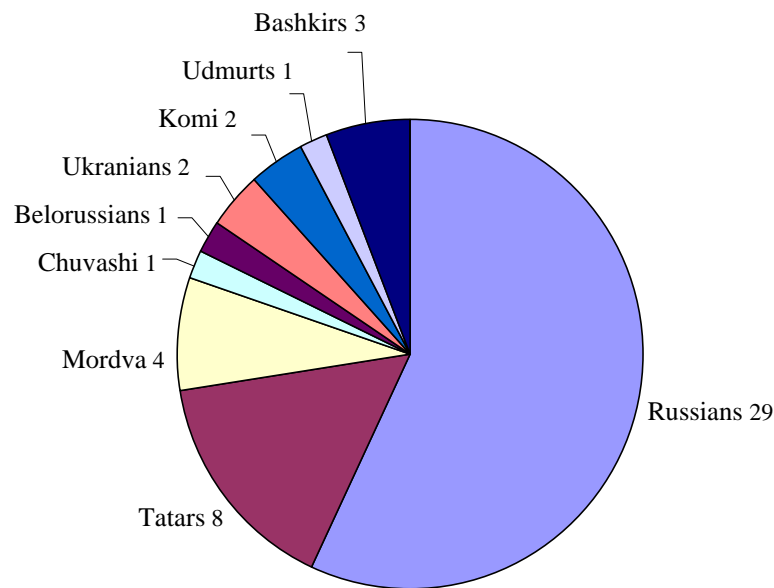


In general, 51 respondents from both regions - Saratov and Perm - belong to nine nationalities. The vast majority of them were ethnic Russians. The second largest ethnic group in both regions were Tatars. People of Mordva, Chivashi, Komi, Udmurt and Bashkir nationality

are statistically significantly represented in the Perm region and thus in my sample the respondents of these groups are also represented. The Ukrainians and Belorussians represent rather big communities in the Saratov region in general, and people of these nationalities were among my respondents as well. The diagram shows the distribution of the respondents by nationality in both regions.

Diagram 2

**Respondents from Perm and Saratov by Nationality**



All the interviews were conducted at the participants' work places, in the offices of the respondents. On average the interviews were an hour and a half long, with several exceptions when some of them lasted for an hour or an hour and a half. All of the interviews taken were tape recorded and transcribed.

**Background and Current Issue**

As the Russian historical legacy has shown, granting different rights to different group of national and ethnic minorities would not be accepted in Russia as a fair outcome of the multicultural policy and would probably lead to the rise of tensions between the Russian majority and non-Russian groups as well as within the minority groups themselves. Moreover, it is simply impossible to correctly put the majority of the non-Russian population of the Russian Federation into the boxes of national or ethnic minorities. For example, how would one attribute minorities from the so-called 'internal diasporas', such as Tatars, Bashkirs, and Chuvash, who have their own 'titular republic' within the Russian Federation but who live outside of it? Similarly, how would one refer to the Russians who live in the autonomous republics within Russia? Is it appropriate to consider these people to be immigrants? Or are they more likely to be

national minorities? Depending on the tremendous diversity and complexity of cultures living together within Russia's territory and sometimes on the historical pre-conditions of their contemporary status, it is sort of dangerous to draw a line between 'hosts' and 'guests' in Russia.

Therefore, multiculturalism taken as a 'normative response to the fact of diversity' explains what civil servants do with this fact while designing and launching ethno-policy. Hence, the main principles of multiculturalism, such as equal opportunities for all citizens, social inclusion, and understanding and respect of ethnic and cultural diversity ought to fit the Russia's social and political reality in order to become the basis for ethno-policy developed in the country.

Society where multiculturalism is accepted and run as an option for ethno-policy can be described as 'a polity in which every individual receives equitable recognition of the identity both as a citizen, and as a member of a particular faith, ethnic group, or other cultural community' (Tyler, 2004: 20). It is quite clear that certain actions must be taken by the state in order to make all the members of the society feel equally valued and recognized. In a similar manner, the necessity of a state's intervention can be derived from one more observation of the multicultural society presented by Raz (1994). The three strengths of a multicultural society highlighted by Raz were as follows:

- the life of most cultural groups instantiates 'true values' and a valuable way of life. A multicultural society allows a plurality of valuable cultures to co-exist with the minimum tension;
- a multicultural society is more likely to provide individuals with opportunities to escape groups that repress some 'important aspects of one's nature', such as sexual orientation;
- it should not be forgotten that some people are so tightly entwined in their original culture that they could not leave it without being psychologically crippled (Raz, 1994: 183; 185; 178-80).

Based on the evidence from the interviews with the regional civil servants from Perm and Saratov this paper gives a brief description of conceptualization of multiculturalism in Russia's regions and offers some explanations to the lack of multicultural policies in Russia.

In order to develop a more relevant understanding of multiculturalism, in particular in Saratov and Perm regions, the concept of multiculturalism as a policy needs to be studied more carefully from the point of view of those who are responsible for the launching and implementation of the ethno-policy in the region – namely, from the point of view of the regional senior civil servants.

## **Ethnic diversity of the regions being studied**

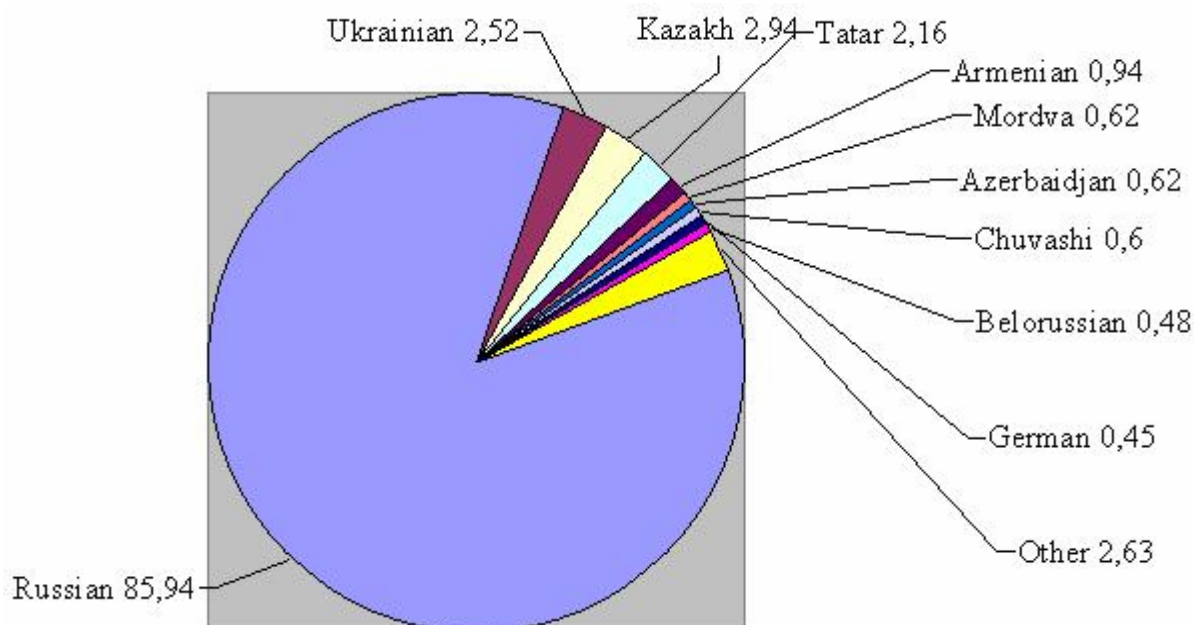
It is necessary to state that each region – either Perm or Saratov – can be considered as a local projection of the Russian Federation in terms of the ethnic background of its population . There are about 112 nationalities in the Saratov region. Although the majority of the population in the region, as well as in Russia as a whole, consists of ethnic Russians (about 81 per cent of the region's population), the ethnic minorities such as Tatars (2.16 per cent), Mordva (0.62 per cent), Chuvashi (0.6 per cent), Kazakhs (2.94 per cent) historically consider themselves as important ethnic groups in the Saratov region (Normativnije Akti Po Nacionalnim Voprosam, 2001). These minorities seem to be integrated into the mainstream.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union this particular region has become one of the most popular recipients of immigrants from the former Soviet Republics. According to the estimates of the Regional Migration Service, an influx of more than 260, 000 into the Saratov region was registered by the end of the year 2005. This constituted about 9,5 per cent of the region's actual population in 2005. The vast majority of immigrants come from the Northern Caucasus (Chechnya, Dagestan), Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine. These people do not usually have Russian citizenship yet, and a significant number of them are economic immigrants and refugees seeking asylum.

Several decades ago, one could hardly describe the Saratov region in terms of an ethnically segmented or divided society. But during the period of transition a rise of ethnic self-identification took place, and now the region's population can be seen as really diverse and multicultural (Diagram 1). Even integrated minorities have their claims to the protection of their native languages, access to resources, and to fair treatment in the labour market.

### The main nationalities of the Saratov region

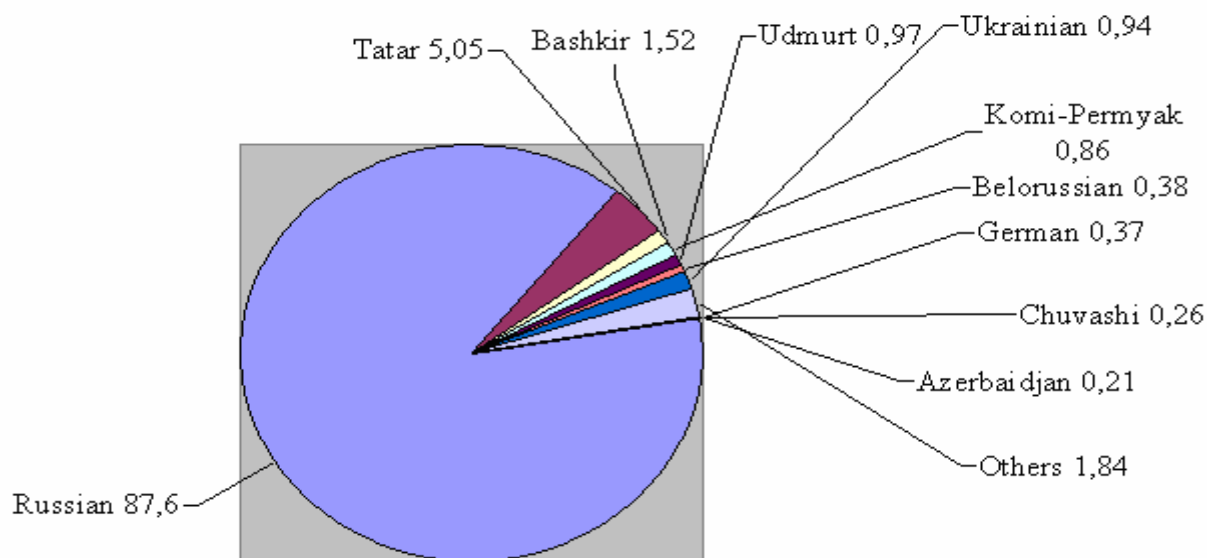
(% of the total population of the region, as of October 2002)



\* Source: The data for the diagram was taken from the Census 2002 official data available at the site of the National Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation: [www.gks.ru](http://www.gks.ru)

The Perm region (West of the Ural Mountains), is also one of the most multicultural regions not only in the Urals, but in Russia as a whole. There are more than 100 nationalities living together in the Perm region, among those the most numerous are people of Russian, Tatar, Komi-Permyak, Bashkir, Ukrainian, Udmurt, and Belorussian origins. People of German, Jewish, Mordva, and Chuvash nationalities are also represented in the region. (Chernykh, 1998: 32). It can be easily seen that the ethnic backgrounds of the inhabitants of both regions – Saratov and Perm – are quite similar.

**The main nationalities of the Perm region**  
 (% of the total population of the region, as of October 2002)\*



Source: The data for the Diagram 2 was taken from the Census 2002 official data available at the site of the National Statistics Committee of the Russian Federation : [www.gks.ru](http://www.gks.ru)

### **A state of ethno-cultural measures in the regions**

Being aware of the fact that a wide spectrum of diverse cultures resides in the region, the Saratov regional government has welcomed the formation of the ethnic and cultural public organizations. By 2001 there were fifty-six ethno-cultural Centres and ethnic Associations registered in the Saratov region. In order to encourage and support the cultural development of different ethnic communities in the region, a special festivity – An Ethnic Culture Day – has been launched to celebrate and show respect for the cultural traditions of Tatar-Bashkirs, Germans, Finno-Ugric and Ukrainians. The region has actively utilized such a form of ethnic self-formation as the model of the Ethno-Cultural Autonomy, which has become an option of public self-government. Available in the two main forms – territorial (ethnic districts, ethnic communities, friendly associations of people of a particular nationality) and ex-territorial (ethnic associations, ethnic unions, ethnic societies) – Ethno-Cultural Autonomies in the Saratov region have appeared on the regional and local levels. According to the official data of the Saratov

regional Ministry of Cultural Affairs, there are seven Ethno-Cultural Autonomies registered in Saratov region, namely the Ukrainian, the Kazakh, the Tatar, the German, the Armenian, the Jewish, and the Chuvashi Ethno-Cultural Autonomies (Obshaya Kharakteristika Territorii, 2005).

The Saratov region has been also known as a region where a unique ethnic site called The Ethnic Village has been built to make the cultures of the main ethnic groups from the regions more publicized and to expose these cultures to the region's population. It is widely advertised in media, that The Ethnic Village has appeared to be an achievement of the close and fruitful cooperation between the regional government and the public ethnic organizations along with the Ethno-Cultural Autonomies in the Saratov region. Recently, the regional achievements in the ethno-cultural policy have been called successful and unique. The fact that there were no disputes or conflicts on the ground of ethnicity or religion in the Saratov region during the last eight years was used to justify this positive appreciation (Shinchuk, 2004).

The Second Principal Programme for the Social and Ethno-Cultural Development of the Nationalities of Saratov Region (2003-2006)<sup>1</sup> sought to provide an integration of the efforts of the regional power bodies along with the ethnic communities in achieving worthy living standards for every resident of the Saratov region. This Programme was sharing the main ideas and principles with The Programme of 1998-2001. As it was emphasized in it, the 2003-2006 Programme was based on three fundamental approaches:

- 1) ethnic and cultural pluralism as a necessary condition of the preservation and development of the public consensus in the region;
- 2) harmonization of the inter-ethnic relations from the stand point of the equality, inclusion and participation, which serves for the stabilization of the social and cultural environment in the region;
- 3) integration as a gradual process which encourages all the residents of the different nationalities to actively participate in social, economic, cultural and spiritual life of the region and of the country as a whole (Programma, 1998: 11).

Thus, the regional government has at least on paper acknowledged the diverse ethnic nature of the Saratov region and has made several attempts towards making all the nationalities feeling respected and sharing equal appreciation from the government and the residents of the region. However, the regional government in Saratov does not demonstrate the understanding that ethnic diversity should receive recognition within government and civil service themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> The first Principal Programme for the Social and Ethno-Cultural Development of the Nationalities of Saratov Region was carried out in 1998-2001.

The regional government does not even keep track of the region's civil servants by nationality or ethnic origin (Ruban, 2003).

The Perm region has appeared to be one of the most advanced regions of the Russian Federation with regard to working out nationality policy strategies for the regional population. Starting from the beginning of the 1990s, when the collapse of the Soviet Union was accompanied by the raise of the self-consciousness of the ethnic minority groups, the regional government has launched and successfully carried out a number of Programmes focused on the harmonious development of all the nationalities and ethnic groups resided in the region. Among them, The Programme for the Development of the Ethnic Cultures of the Peoples of the Kama Area for 1993-1995 and 1996-1998; The Programme for the Development and Harmonization of the Ethnic Relations of the Peoples of the Perm Region for 1999-2003 and 2004-2008 have to be mentioned. As in the case of the Saratov region, the latter Programme serves in Perm as the primary tool for managing ethnic diversity in one of the most polyethnic regions in the Russian Federation.

The Programme has highlighted that in order to promote good ethnic relations in the region and fight ethnic and religious extremism, it would be important:

- to coordinate the efforts of the executive power bodies in the region in the sphere of the ethnic relations;
- to adjust the actions of the federal authorities and the bodies of the local self-government with the civil society institutions;
- to apply new innovative methods of managing of the inter-ethnic relations in the regions;
- to permanently conduct research on the ethno-cultural environment in the region (Oblastnaya Tselevaya Programma, 2004).

Likewise as in Saratov, the number of the ethnic groups and nationalities in the Perm region have chosen to establish Ethno-Cultural Autonomy. Among the most active the Tatar-Bashkir and the Jewish Regional Ethno-Cultural Autonomies should be mentioned. In general, both the regional and the local possible levels of the Ethno-Cultural Autonomies formation have been utilized in the Perm region. There are six Ethno-Cultural Autonomies in the region, including the Chuvashi, the Tatar, the Tatar-Bashkir, the Jewish, the German, and the Polish (Obyedineniya Natsional'nykh Men'shinstv, 2001). It is important to underline, that regardless of the fact that inter-ethnic relations in the region seem to be under the control of the regional and municipal government in the Saratov and the Perm region alike, it was not easy to find exact relevant data on the number of Ethno-Cultural Autonomies in the regions. The data has



differed from source to source and it has indicated that a constant study and monitoring of the ethno-cultural environment and publication of the updated information in the regions has yet to be accomplished. In addition to the Ethno-Cultural Autonomies, there are Ethno-Cultural Centres for the German, the Slavs, the Polish, the Udmurt, the Mari, the Komi-Permyak minorities established in the Perm Region. Some rather weak attempts to consolidate and create centres have been also made by the Estonians, Belorussians and Ukrainians. They have dispersed over the Perm region and have become noticeably assimilated (Obyedineniya Nacional'nykh Men'shinstv, 2001).

Unlike the Saratov region, the regional authorities in the Perm region have never utilized the concept of multiculturalism as a model for the ethno-cultural regional policy. At the same time, like the Saratov regional government, the Perm regional government has focused its efforts and attention on the preservation and development of the diverse cultures of the region, being especially concerned with language, folklore, ethnic practices and traditions of the minority ethnic groups. The issues of social inclusion, equal opportunities and equal participation of the minorities in all the spheres of the regional life have been more likely to appear as a desirable outcome of the special harmonization Programmes launched in the regions, rather than an effective means of accomplishing the expected harmonization. Neither in Perm nor in Saratov, has an active participation of the ethnic minorities in the decision making on the regional level through more fair representation of the non-Russian nationalities within the senior civil service, ever been considered as a component of the process of building and promotion of a good inter-ethnic relations in the regions.

Neither in Saratov nor in the Perm region, have any significant ethnically based conflicts been registered during a rather long period of time. Nevertheless, in the late 1980s, the regional authorities have considered some of the ethnic aspects of the regional development as deserving special attention. Among the most problematic facts were the following:

- there were very few 'ethnic-minority schools' in the regions, and these schools had not provided a sufficient level of knowledge in ethnic history and the culture of the correspondent ethnic minority groups;
- the level of the publication of books in the native language of the regional ethnic minority groups was insufficient;
- ethnic traditions and practices in common everyday life, including the reproduction of an ethnic folklore, and dealing with national cuisine and costumes, were rapidly disappearing, and even the Russian culture as a majority culture was not an exception;

- there was a lack of stable inter-ethnic relations between the most influential and substantial Komi, Tatar, Bashkir and Udmurt cultures in the region;
- the regional mass media were lacking programmes in minority languages. (Chernykh, 1998: 33).

These are just a few issues that had reminded the regional authorities of the importance of the ethnic component of the social and political life in the region. All of the mentioned issues mainly concern such important cultural components as language and folklore.

In order not to foment any kind of deep dissatisfaction among the ethnic minorities and in response to the outlined problems, a number of measures have been taken by the Perm Regional Administration, including the elaboration of a comprehensive programme entitled The Ethnic-Minority School between 1990 and 1995 the establishment of The Socio-Cultural and Nationalities Affairs Office within the Perm Regional Administration.

Of course, the desire to preserve ethnic minority cultures and to support their traditions and languages is extremely important and helpful. But does it meet all the needs of ethnic minorities in the region? And does it really help to make all the nationalities in the regions feel equally valued? These are questions I also address in this paper.

Unfortunately, just language and folklore components of a cultural variety of the region's population have never stimulated or encouraged the local authorities to go beyond them and set up some kind of government programmes aiming to use this diversity as an advantage in terms of economic, social and political development of the region. This is the case because, first, at least it would definitely require a more intensive study of social stratification in connection to issues of ethnicity in the region, as well as an exploration of the attitudes and values of Russians and non-Russians regarding each other, the study of the economic status of minority groups and of their social and political activity, and the study of the position ethnic minorities occupy in the labour market. Second, when it comes to the specific social, economic, and political steps to be taken in relation to matters of ethnicity, the government is likely to see this task as extremely complicated and precarious - it is probably not the top priority on the list of government activities.

This picture does contribute to the conclusion that unfortunately up to now both scientists and politicians have remained convinced that as long as the ethnic situation in the region remains stable, peaceful and calm, this means that all the regional government activities in this field might be limited to celebrating cultural diversity through nationality festivals, and to establishing and opening ethno-cultural Centers in the regions, which might help to create positive and stable ethnic identities and to promote tolerance and good inter-ethnic relations.

Even the prestigious and internationally recognized research institute of the Russia's Academy of Science – The Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology - does not include in its recommendations for the governmental bodies the importance of diversity management through an active involvement of ethnic minorities in public service and their fair representation in all spheres of civil life. Those recommendations resulted from a project carried out in 2002 as a part of the Federal Specified Programme on Tolerance Development and Extremism Prevention in Russia's Society (2001-2005) (<http://www.iea.ras.ru/projects/ethnotolerans/4.htm> – Projekt 'Socialno-Psihologicheskie Faktori Ethnicheskoi Tolerantnosti'). Like many others, scholars from The Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology ignore the significance of ethnic minority participation in decision-making through representation within the civil service

In general, whatever policy towards ethnic minorities are active at present in the regions, currently Russia as a whole has no fully explicit 'nationality policy', which deals with the ethnicities and nationalities comprising the country's diverse population and with ethnic relations, and which is aimed at solving the long-standing and persistent 'nationality question' in the Russian Federation (Abdulatipov, 2001; Drobizheva, 2003; Tishkov, 2003).

### **Civil Servants' Personal Attitudes Impact on Conceptualizing of Multiculturalism**

As it was explained earlier in this paper, in order to proceed to studying multiculturalism based on the Russian civil servants experience I had to ask my respondents from the regional governments of Saratov and Perm about the so-called 'nationality question' instead of explaining to them the nature of multiculturalism and diversity in its Western form and trying to get some reflections on that.

In the Russian academic and political tradition 'national' as well as 'multinational' refers to the category of 'ethnicity', rather than to the notion of citizenship and nationhood. Back in Soviet times ethnic or national peculiarities were celebrated within the USSR by presenting national costumes, ethnic food and pointing out the unity of the 'fifteen republics – fifteen sisters' within the Soviet Union (See Appendix 1). However, the Soviet doctrine of 'internationalism' presumed the supremacy of the communist ideology and the dominance of the 'official' Russian culture within the borders of the former Soviet Union. That has led to the gradual disappearance of ethnic minority languages and an underestimation of the value of different cultures. Even though at first glance the declared 'equality' of all the nationalities was achieved in the USSR, the reality was different. For instance, the representatives of particular Middle Asian republics such as Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan were considered to be less intellectual, less civilized, less educated, more prepared for unskilled jobs than Russians.

That is why already in the post-soviet Russia the recent passport reform excluded mention of the actual nationality of the passport holder. Too many people in Russia still

remember how dangerous it was in the past, for example, to be of a Jewish descent. Furthermore, nowadays a lot of people are probably going to learn how complicated it is to be a Muslim, even if your nationality is not written down in your passport.

Formally Russia does still fall into the category of the multinational state which voluntarily adopted multicultural federalism in 1993. However, even though the Article 26.2 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation states ‘everyone has the right of the native language user, right to voluntary choice of the language of relations, upbringing, education and creation’, not all of these positions of institutional completeness (Kymlicka, 2003) are actually guaranteed. The interviews conducted with my respondents shed light on the issue of the readiness of society and government to accept, respect and manage diversity. Considering the lack of systematic data and research on such a sensitive issue, the respondents’ views and opinions on the importance of paying attention to the ‘nationality question’ in the Saratov and Perm regions have become of a great value with regard to the development of a new analytical approach to ethnic minority accommodation in these regions.

Asking the civil servants about the so-called ‘nationality question’ and how it appears in their routine professional activities, I assumed that the answers might show the respondents’ awareness of cultural diversity in terms of ethnicity and the significance of this issue within the regional civil service. It was also my intention to learn about the differences between the interviewees’ perceptions of the ‘multinational soviet people’ of the former Soviet Union and those of the ‘multinational people of the Russian Federation’ nowadays.

### **Perceiving Nationality Question as a painful one**

The majority of the respondents suggested that the ‘nationality question’ is a very painful and sensitive one. Many of the respondents pointed out that the ‘nationality question’ – the issue of ethnic diversity – is at the same time a very important but also a very frightening question:

‘the nationality question has always appeared to be very painful for Russians in any sphere of society’s life’.

(16)

Both Russian and non-Russian interviewees suggested that:

‘... the ‘nationality question’ is one of the most sensitive. Although it is always kept secret, concealed somehow, because the nationalities issue is complicated’.

(24)

At the same time virtually all the senior civil servants observed that:

‘.. there is no doubt that the problem exists. It needs to be addressed and the sociological scrutiny of the issue is of great need today’.

(23)

The majority of the respondents from the Russian regions assumed that it would be better to leave the issue of cultural and ethnic diversity alone as the division of society along the nationality line has always seemed to be natural. Some of the interviewees have recalled a popular opinion from the Soviet times that it was indecent to discuss in public one's nationality, faith and salary. These aspects were seen exclusively as matters of the private realm.

‘It is important to study ethnic and nationality processes in the region, perhaps some proactive and preventive steps might be developed in order to prevent conflicts. But the cultural differences, the differences between nationalities, should not be over-stressed. This should exist at the instinct level. This is natural that we are of different nationalities. No need to talk about this. This is the fact. This is very natural. When I talk about this, I stress that you are different, you are not like me... But what does really distinguish us? Mainly the language. But we usually have the same problems, even though we belong to different nationalities. If someone points out the nationality background of others, I feel suspicious towards this person. I think, he or she makes this distinction on purpose. And not always these purposes appear to be of good intentions’.

(19)

### **Comparing Russians and non-Russians**

In general, the level of theorizing about multiculturalism and diversity which has been reflected in the interviews with the civil service has appeared to be presented in the following: from the Russian respondents' point of view, diversity has commonly been seen as a problem in the same way as has been the 'difference'. In the Russian case, what makes 'them' – the ethnic minorities and 'us' – the primordial ethnic Russians similar are the common problems of social and economic nature, that both Russians and non-Russians face and have to live through. One more illustrative opinion to support the above assumption has been expressed by the respondent from Saratov:

‘Even being of a different ethnic descent, we are all similar with regard to the problems we face in our lives – I mean the problems with finding a job, with struggling for a decent salary, bringing up our children, giving them good education, etc. We all have to resolve these problems, despite of the nationality and ethnic origin’.

(27)

The vast majority of the respondents from the both regions have tended to make a comparison between the Russian majority and any other minority cultures, explaining that for them diversity implies an existence of some nationalities which are better than other for some reason. Ethnic diversity has been observed by the interviewees as something obviously based on a different spectrum of cultural values and thus the civil servants have tended to assess diversity in a negative way.

‘I am always eager to say that the Russians should be put on the first place. I think it is my national Russian pride speaking out here... However, the tolerance of other nationalities and other cultures has to be brought up from the early years. Here, I would say, the inflexibility of our culture is also evident... We tend to accept everything similar to us and our own view and values, and usually reject everything which is different’.

(29)

It was quite evident from the interviews with the Russian civil servants that almost all of them had had a feeling that some nationalities were more close to their own nationality, but some of the nationalities were perceived as a sort of an ‘alien element’. For example, a lot of respondents from the both regions have seen the Tatars in the same way as the Russians, feeling sometimes that people of these two nationalities nowadays look very similar and it is even hard to distinguish them from each other. These opinions might be also supported by the data gathered in Perm in 2000 by the scholars from the Sociological Research Centre of the Perm State Technical University<sup>2</sup>. According to the their findings, Russians and non-Russians alike consider as quite close to themselves representatives of the Tatar, Bashkir, Udmurt and Komi-Permyak nationality. Being asked to indicate some nationalities which might be perceived as the aliens, 34.7 per cent of the respondents said that ‘there are no such nationalities’ for them, and 18.8 per cent found it difficult to give such an example. At the same time, the rest of the respondents listed some of the aliens, which were as follows in the descending order from the most alien to the less alien: Chechens, Azerbaijani, Armenians, Georgians, nationalities from the Middle Asia, Roma and Jews (Leibovitch, Stegnyy, et al. 2003: 181-83).

In this study, there were mainly Russians who recalled some painful recollections about the representatives of the minority groups from the Soviet past or from more recent times. Not all of the negative impressions have referred exclusively to the nationalities from the Caucasus republics, as it is commonly expected to be. A number of the respondents remembered non-friendly attitudes of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian people to the Russians:

‘Once, it was in the times when the USSR had been flourishing, I travelled with my friends to the Baltic republics – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. It was then when we first felt sort of humiliated and discriminated. I have never felt like that in the Caucasus republics or Asian republics! We were more than welcomed there in Georgia, in Armenia, in Uzbekistan... But in the Baltic it was very different... Even in the shopping malls. The variety of goods there was much better than in the peripheral Russia and we were eager to do shopping there. But most of the time we were sort of neglected by the shop assistants. If there were local people shopping at the same time with us, the personnel in the malls would never serve us until they are

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<sup>2</sup> The study sought to analyze socio-cultural attributes of the inter-ethnic relations in the city of Perm at the end of the XX century. The proportional quota sample had covered 946 participants and included representatives of the most numerous fifteen nationalities resided in the city of Perm.

finished with anybody else who are from Latvian or any other local ethnicity. Local people were always first to be served. We felt really uncomfortable.’

(30)

### **Making judgement on one’s nationality origin**

On average the regional civil servants have demonstrated a great level of uncertainty about whether it would be positive to pay attention to ethnic diversity of the region’s population. For the most part, they have had negative personal attitude towards diversity, perceiving it primarily as a factor disuniting and setting people of different nationalities against each other. While observing their personal feelings about ethnic minorities, the interviewees from the Russian regions have demonstrated a tendency, first to make judgments and to stick labels on the non-Russian representatives, and only after that to come to the conclusion that finally it is very important to be tolerant and show respect for diversity.

It is important to underline here, that the meaning of an ‘ethnic minority’ in Russia in addition to the obvious, direct numeric sense has been commonly loaded with such attributes as ‘less civilized’ and ‘less educated’. Usually, the term ‘ethnic minorities’ (‘natsmen’shinstva’) have referred to the representatives of such nationalities from the Caucasus and Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, as Armenians, Chechens, Azerbaijani, Uzbeks, Tadjiks, Turkmens, to name a few. All of them might be considered as ‘visible minorities’. At the same time, it was rather uncommon to refer, for example, to Ukrainians or Belorussians as ethnic minorities, because despite the numbers of their population in Russia, anthropological characteristics of these groups were seen as the same with ethnic Russians. It is also possible to say, that on everyday basis, the meaning of minority has become limited to ‘non-Russians’, and the respondents in both regions have preferred to speak just about Russians and non-Russians without making the term minority explicit.

### **Ideological explanation of the attitudes to the nationality question**

While offering an explanation for the feeling that ethnic diversity is not good to be cultivated and supported, the Russian respondents have rather often mentioned the pitfalls of the Soviet nationality policy which had led to the demolition of the Soviet Union. An ideological component seems to be the most common and most frequent factor in the majority of the explanations that the interviewees gave on what was done wrong by the Soviet and later by the Russian leaders in terms of nationality policy. As one of the respondents from Saratov put it:

‘I tend to blame the nationality policy of the Communist Party which had permitted the USSR to collapse and which had divided the USSR into these specific countries – Russia and others. We used to live all together, no one raised any nationality issues. Of course there were some problems in relation to that, but these were kind of routine,

everyday questions, nothing more. They had not led to the secession, to the conflicts’.

(29)

This opinion actually holds a number of unvoiced issues, as well as some subtle controversies, but in general it expresses the impossibility of the USSR’s official Soviet ideology to find the right response to the NQ. In an attempt to explain the latent problems existing between the lines of thought in the above citation, I would like to emphasize a number of things. First of all, one should not miss the fact that these ‘kind of routine’ issues have been constantly on the state’s agenda in slightly modernized variants for the total period of the Soviet and Russian states’ existence, and they are probably here to stay. Second, a ‘not raised nationality issue’ arguably means ‘not raised structural disparity issues’, because as the theory and the data collected have observed, nationality as such has been rarely taken seriously as a reason for conflict. However, and this is the third thing to point out, the issue of national background has been a ground for stereotyping and prejudice for a long time and is still influencing public opinion to some extent, as the latest surveys along with the present study have stated. And fourth, probably one of the most important aspects is that by the time of *perestroika* and *democratizatsiya* the pace of the economic growth in the republics as well as the relative levels of development achieved differed greatly. For example, according to Schroeder (1999), ‘national income per capita in 1985 ranged from less than half the all-union average in Tadjikistan to more than one-third above that average in Latvia and Estonia, with Belorussia and the RSFSR next. These latter four republics, along with Lithuania, also ranked highest with regard to industrial output per capita, while the four Central Asian republics were lowest on both measures’ (Schroeder, 1999: 49).

### **Political explanation of the attitudes to the nationality question**

Another flaw that has to be improved in order to make the NQ less painful and to help the civil service to become more diverse and multicultural is dealing with the ‘ethnicity/nationality principle’ which has been put into the foundation of the Russian Federation as a federative state (see Appendix E). The negative consequences of this type of federative structure in Russia have been pointed out by the interviewees as a main argument of the long-lasting NQ in the country. However, indisputably this problem is not easy to tackle, as any attempts to do so would imply making amendments to The Constitution of the Russian Federation. As I have previously mentioned, the process of the merging of the existing units of the Russian Federations has been initiated and is presently under way in Russia. However, I doubt that this process would touch upon the national republics, such as Tatarstan, which at present enjoy an equal status with other units of the federation, such as the regions, krais, and autonomous okrugs. Thus, the very structure of the Russian Federation at the moment has been seen as a factor which makes the NQ more intractable. The following opinion from a civil servant clarified the correlation between the



problem discussed above and the results that some of the nationality policy initiatives might have in practice:

‘I believe, that the initial mistake was made when the subject of the Russian Federation had been created on the nationality basis, on the ethnicity basis. All the republics within the Russian Federation are national republics with a specific titular nation in each. I am sure that all the subjects in the federation should be created on the territorial basis. So, now we have, for example, Bashkortostan, the republic within the Russian Federation, where the titular nation – the Bashkirs – in fact don’t constitute the majority in the republic. However, all the leadership positions on the republic level as well as on the local level are taken by the Bashkirs. And this principle is being followed in all the national republics. So the question arises – are there any talented people from the other nationalities in these republics to serve as the senior officials? So, I don’t support this ‘nationality’ or ‘ethnic’ principle of the federative structure in Russia. It creates a number of problems as such, because any attempts to change or improve the situation within the non-titular nationalities in the republics are inevitably seen as potentially disadvantaged for the titular population’.

(37)

The last argument of this opinion correlates strongly with the social, economic and political statuses of the titular and non-titular nationalities within the republics in the Russian Federation. As Tishkov (1997) noted, ‘it is common for members of certain ethnic groups to play leading roles in industrialization, land exploration, and resources development’ and thereby to enjoy a better social and economic status. However, he continues, ‘the paradox of the present situation is that those industries with predominantly Russian-speaking personnel provide major sources of the GNP (for example, 80% in Tatarstan and Yakutia <...>) to territories in which political power is in the hands of non-Russians’ (Tishkov, 1997: 280). Here the well known question of ‘who feeds whom’ arises, which, as the data from the present research has shown, has often been articulated by the respondents.

In addition to this and also in the context of the latter, I assume that there is one more significant problem behind the last quoted opinion. This is the issue of a so-called ‘new Russian diaspora’, meaning those approximately 25 million ethnic Russians who, as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, found themselves outside the borders of their state, ‘most of them without any feeling of ever having emigrated’ (Aasland, 1996: 477). As Alexander Ossipov has indicated, the ‘Russians in the former Soviet Union did not move from their state; rather, the state ‘moved’ from them’ (Ossipov, 2001: 180).

Some respondents from Perm recalled the times when the Russians from Georgia (Abkhasia), Azerbaijan, Moldova (Trans-Dniestr) and some of the Central Asian states found themselves in the centre of armed conflicts and were forced to migrate to Russia’s regions. Many of the interviewees were involved in communication with the Russian refugees or ‘forced migrants’ at the beginning of the 1990s and still keep in memory very vivid images of

emotionally and physically exhausted people, many of whom had been forced to leave virtually all their possessions behind. Therefore, for the majority of them it was a big problem to settle at a new place and to begin a new life in Russia. Certainly, this kind of negative experience the civil servants had while working with these groups of people have affected their attitudes towards some particular non-Russian nationalities. As a result, the desire to see the representatives of these ethnic groups among their peers within the regional civil service was not high among the respondents.

‘After the Soviet Union demolition a lot of inter-ethnic relations and the conflicts between the different nationalities had appeared to be on the Russian agenda. I am confident, that this should not have been done like that. It was made under the nationalist forces’ pressure from the USSR national republics. The alternative way should have been chosen. Perhaps, independence might have been granted to some nationalities not in the form of the territorial independence. It might have been done through granting equal rights and opportunities to the minority nationalities’.

(65)

Thus, a big load of problems related to the demise of the Soviet Union as such, to its consequences not only for the Russians but for all the other nationalities, as well as the unresolved question of the ethnicity-based federation have had an impact on the respondents’ personal attitudes to diversity, multiculturalism and the ‘nationality question’. As it could be observed, for the interviewees from Russia, the historical legacy along with the personal experiences of a negative and insulted nature have rather often dominated in the opinions on the ‘nationality question’ in the regions. All the issues discussed above might be also seen as serious obstacles on the way to the ‘Russian multiculturalism’ within the civil service in the regions studied.

### **Civil Servants’ Professional Views Impact on Conceptualizing of Multiculturalism**

While it was not so difficult for the respondents to speak about what they personally think about ethnic diversity and the ‘nationality question’ in the regions, nevertheless, it needed much more effort to make up their minds and to share their professional opinions on the ‘nationality question’ and ethnic diversity within the regional civil service.

Basically, those who agreed with the importance and actuality of the ‘nationality question’ (NQ) in the regional civil service in both cities argued that, since Russia is really a multinational country, the government and the civil service should be, too. Many respondents think that if there are no quotas for the minorities in the civil service and government nowadays – that means exactly that there are no problems with them and their representation in the power echelons. Some of the participants also admitted that they have never even thought about the

ethnic diversity issue within their organizations before being asked about it in the interview. They also argued that the less attention they pay to that diversity, the fewer problems they may face. This opinion was particularly widespread amongst the Perm respondents (19 of 36 agreed with that). More precisely those people explained their attitudes as follows:

“I am sure that this NQ is not really an issue for the cities with the majority of the Russian population, it is a forced and artificial problem for them. I am the Head of the Department, there are 14 people in it, 13 of those are of Slavic appearance. I have no idea whether they are ethnically Russians, or Ukrainians, or Belorussians... Only one woman is of Tatar origin”.

(33)

In order to justify their positions about the non-existence of NQ within the regional civil service, respondents spoke about a peaceful, non-conflictive working environment and the low representation of ethnic minorities on different management levels:

“It is possible to say, that there is no NQ on the regional civil service agenda at the moment, because, thank God, there are not any conflicts connected to that question. One more explanation why I do think so is because we don’t pay attention to the nationality of our civil servants. One more reason to say that we have no “nationality question” is few people of non-Russian descent among our civil servants”.

(21)

Growing up in Soviet times, most of the respondents have very rarely or never thought about their peers or more senior staff in terms of diversity:

“I have never thought of how diverse our Department is. I can’t say that we give any privileges to the representatives of the national majority or the minorities. Moreover, according to the Federal Law this is the right of any citizen of the Russian Federation to apply for the job in the civil service regardless of ethnic, and gender background. The main thing we are looking at when selecting candidates for the vacancy advertised is the level of education and how he or she meets the professional requirements”.

(42)

However, paying no attention to ethnicity or any other diversifying factor, does not prevent the making of judgments or the recalling of some negative emotions related to representatives of non-Russian, minority ethnic groups, just in the same way as it was done while expressing personal, not professional opinions:

“Of course, it can be recognized visually that some of the civil servants are not from the majority groups – that means they are not Russians, but in general it doesn’t matter. The main thing is whether the person is good at his job and is a respectable employee. As a matter of fact, it seems to me, that it is better not to be focused on the nationality of civil servants. As soon as you do that – it means, you do this on purpose. And what can this purpose be? For instance, to find out, how these people do their job in comparison with Russians? It means right away that we keep in mind that Russians differ from non-Russians, some one is better, some one is worse.

Something else that comes to your mind at once is the unpleasant incidents you've got in your everyday life concerned with the Armenians or Azerbaijani in the market place and at the next moment you're getting into the bad mood".

(17)

As it can be seen, for a great number of respondents the lack of minority representatives within the civil service in both regions means just fewer problems to cope with and nothing more. The colour-blind or ethnicity-blind approach to the issue is seen as the best solution.

The opinions observed above make it clear, that the whole load of professional attitudes of the Russian civil servants to the NQ and ethnic diversity within the civil service have been built on the presumption of the ideas of assimilation, which have put the Russian culture and Russian people into the leading, commanding position. The degree of assimilation might have been described according to a number of satisfied conditions, such as:

- substitution of the minority group's cultural models with those of the host majority group;
- absence of value and power conflicts;
- absence of discrimination (Bolaffi et al., 2003: 20-21).

All of these conditions have been nominally satisfied in the former Soviet Union, as the interviewees have declared.

The moral aspect and a good personality of the colleagues have been always underlined as the first indicator for the judgment of the non-Russian nationalities, along with professionalism, knowledge and skills. The existence of certain shared values, such as mutual respect, mutual assistance, and friendship between all the nationalities were considered by the respondents as the ties that still bind the people in Russia. Also, 'the spiritual commonality of the socialist nationalities' has not completely vanished from the hearts and minds of the respondents, even being affected by a number of psychological traumas connected to the ethnic conflicts in the wake of the collapse of the USSR (Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1976; Tyldum & Kolstø, 2004).

As the interviews have shown, the civil servants from the both Perm and the Saratov region are not ready at the moment to absorb the 'beauty of multiculturalism' in terms of a more deeper understanding and respect for the particularity and universality of different nationalities. However, the main reason for that might be arguably seen in the fact that most of the respondents were not familiar with the multicultural approach to the solution of the nationality question. Or, in other words, they have never specifically thought about the feeling of 'one united people' of the USSR, or about the presence of a number of the minority nationality schools in the country, or about the literature, the art and music of non-Russian nationalities being taught as a piece of the Russian heritage in every ordinary school in Russia, or about any other the attributes of multiculturalism. These attributes, except for the 'Soviet people' feeling shared by all the nationalities, have been interwoven into the life of the people of Russia at the

every-day basis, and hence have been taken for granted, but under the name of ‘internationalism’, not of ‘multiculturalism’.

It is also important to recognize, based on evidence from the data collected, that the attitudes and values of the senior civil servants in the two Russian regions toward ethnic diversity determine the way the relations between the civil service institution and national minority groups are being developed. In its turn this makes the ethnic dimension of social, political and economic relations in the regions more or less visible depending on what strategy is chosen by the authorities to manage regional diversity.

Currently, as the interviews have revealed, it is more likely that the civil service as a social institution would prefer to stick to the old-fashioned assimilation approach to the “nationality question”, given that the majority of the senior civil servants were in favour of not emphasizing cultural differences and concealing them rather than trying to learn from the multicultural policy, which within the multicultural community celebrates incorporation not as inclusion per se, but as the achievement of diversity.

The most commonly expressed opinion of the Russian civil servants has described diversity and therefore multiculturalism as a problem, rather than a response. On the conceptual level, the respondents from the Russian regions have on average referred to multiculturalism in its descriptive usage and less frequently comprehend it as ideology. A more or less positive meaning of diversity and multiculturalism has been attributed to the first approach. At the same time, the second, more analytical approach to multiculturalism has been seen as making a destructive impact on good inter-ethnic relations in Russia. It has not been perceived either personally or professionally as a competitor to the well-known and already tested option of assimilation.

### **Does The ‘National Question’ Influence The Civil Service in Russia?**

It has been noted earlier in the paper that not all the regions of the Russian Federation collect statistical data on the nationality background of the civil servants. Fifty one regions of Russia from eighty nine have this data available for internal use, but any external enquiry about the ethnic breakdown of the civil service cadres needs to be supported and permitted by the regional authorities. The Republic of Karelia, and the Moscow, Saratov, Tver, as well as the Chelyabinsk regions do not take at all a stock of the civil servants according to their nationality (Ruban, 2003: 179).

The survey conducted by the Perm sociologists mentioned earlier in this paper has presented evidence that the Russian majority, for example, does not agree to see the representatives of the minority cultures holding senior positions in the government and the civil service. The same study has revealed quite common view that the presence of the non-Russians in the regional and local administration was considered to be the factor that actualised the myths and stereotypes about the minorities and might provoke and aggravate inter-ethnic tensions (Leibovitch, Stegnyy, et al., 2003: 245). According to the data collected by the Perm scholars,

more than 56.3 per cent of the civil servants participated in the survey were more likely to support the Russian candidate for the post of Mayor of the city of Perm and would not probably consider the candidates of the Tatar, Bashkir, or Komi-Permyak nationality as an appropriate candidate for this post (Leibovitch, Stegnyy, et al., 2003: 242). Among the nationalities which the respondents have excluded from the list of the potential candidates for the Mayor position in the city of Perm, the following have been mentioned in the descending order – the Azerbaijanians, the Armenians, the Georgians, the Jews, the Germans, the Latvians, the Lithuanians, the Estonians, the Tatars, the Ukrainians, the Roma, the Chechens, the Middle Asian nationalities.

### **The Soviet legacy in the resolution of the ‘nationality question’ and its impact on the presence of minorities within the civil service in Russia**

As my own research has also demonstrated, the same tendency to understand a monocultural government and the civil service as the most appropriate option for the regional administration has become apparent in the contemporary composition of the regional government in the Perm and Saratov regions. Since official data on ethnicity and nationality has been missing in both regions, the only way to make it clear that the non-Russian nationalities have been underrepresented within the regional civil service on the senior positions was to check the official web-sites of the Perm and Saratov regional governments where the list of the senior civil servants by name is available. Because of the specific spelling of the non-Russian last and first names it was possible roughly to pick up the minority members from the list. This simple technique used in 2003 gave me the names of seven non-Russian senior civil servants in the Saratov government and ten minority representatives in the Perm regional government\*. As the ethnic composition of the both regions is rather similar, the cases of the non-Russians in the regional governments have also been quite close in the ethnic background to each other, with the representatives of the Tatar, the Bashkir, the Jewish, the German, the Ukrainian, the Georgian, the Chivash, the Mordva nationality being presented among the senior civil servants in the regions.

Bearing these kinds of preconditions of the insignificant representation of the minority members in the power structures in the regions, I suggested that one of the main reasons for the under representation of non-Russian minorities within the civil service in the Perm and Saratov regions might be arguably rooted in the Soviet legacy of the ‘nationality question’ in the Russian Federation.

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\* \* The official site of the Saratov regional government is available at: [www.saratov.gov.ru](http://www.saratov.gov.ru)

### **“The Russian majority” factor**

Almost all the interviewees expressed the feeling that the social atmosphere had not been marked by the placement of the Russians and non-Russians in different social categories. In general, people were not divided by the ethnic origin or the nationality. This ‘nationality blindness’ was revealed in both private aspects – when the respondents were talking about their friends and neighbours, as well as in the public arena – when they were discussing relations at the workplace with colleagues (peers and bosses).

The ‘Russians majority’ factor was frequently repeated as the most likely reason for the shortage of members of minorities among the senior civil servants. In both research sites the interviewees stated that this appears quite logical to them. The following opinion from a respondent from Saratov summarises this idea:

‘I think that we need to head for the expectations of the majority of the population. I deeply believe in that. In our region the Russians constitute the absolute majority. So I don’t think it is wrong that the vast majority of the senior civil servants in the region are from the Russian background. Anyway, all the people in the region despite of their nationality take part in decision making and in governance through the voting for the elected officials and for the deputies on the regional and local levels’.

(23)

Apparently, while attempting to express the public’s interests and to meet public expectations, the civil service system replaces this public with the majority group. However, in terms of the historical background of interethnic relations in Russia, it may not mean simply that minority interests are being ignored. It also may signify that from the respondent’s point of view, the Russian majority’s interests and expectations are similar to those of non-Russians and rarely come into conflict with the latter. Perhaps, the tendency towards this point of view on the part of the participants is a consequence of the long-living ideology once clearly articulated by Stalin in mid-1930s, being applied through decades, and probably not having vanished completely until today.

This ideology praised the Russian people openly for its past and present virtues, and its role as an ‘elder brother’ in the ‘Soviet family of nations’. That was the period of the Sovietisation of the union republics, and this process was to a large extent dependent on the increasing number of Russian cadres arriving there in this period (Aasland, 1996). Also, the high status of the Russians as ‘first among equals’ (meaning by ‘equals’ all the nationalities of the USSR including the Russians) was ‘intended to facilitate the drawing together of nations into

one Soviet people' (Chinn and Kaiser, 1996: 74). Hence, the Russians were supposed to express the united Soviet people' interests.

Given this explanation, it is not surprising that the opinion of the Russians still are considered to be the reference point in those regions where they form a majority.

Thus, the *first factor*, which, as to the civil servants attitudes, provides the explanation of the fact of the minority under-representation in the civil service, is the *numerical superiority of the Russians* in the studied regions.

### **Non-traditional occupations for minorities**

It is necessary to note that in the context of the narratives it became clear that the experience of working alongside non-Russians was quite different among the civil service members in the sample.

In most of the cases, when the respondents touched upon the good relations between the diverse nationalities in the work place, these references concerned their previous jobs outside the civil service system or government institutions. A number of the respondents, for example, came into the civil service from the industrial sector, where they held a range of supervisor positions. These people were more likely to recall the 'friendship among the different nationalities' as a fundamental characteristic of the inter-ethnic relations of the Soviet period.

In many cases, the relations between the different ethnic groups in personal experience, as well as the publicly declared norms and values regarding these relations in the times of the USSR were seen by the participants as positive, friendly, and encouraging all sorts of interactions between the nationalities in the country:

'The communists had done their best in dealing with the NQ, I mean, they had graded and reduced this question to some extent in the USSR. There were some 'splashes' of the NQ – once it might have been the crazy idea that the Jews were getting the control of the country; next time it might have been somebody else... But there was the central ideology for the whole multinational society, the single ideology – that we are a great and united multinational nation in the country. And this ideology had been welcomed and happily accepted in the society'

(25)

At the same time, in both regions virtually none of the respondents who began their professional career in the civil service, the government institutions or in any kind of bureaucratic organization in the Soviet past could share some significant experience of working in a multicultural environment. Therefore, only rarely someone could recall a minority member in the



senior civil service. However, if it happened, it usually occurred at a very high level of the nomenclature hierarchy. Even nowadays, as the interviews have underlined, minority representatives are rather ambitious and set up high expectations as to the posts they are willing to occupy:

‘I believe, that, for example, Armenian people will not be eager to get simply a job in the civil service, even in the administrative group. This is not prestigious for them. For sure they won’t come, for example, to the local administration, they will need at least the regional administrative body’.

(67)

### **Unspoken, But Clear Taboo**

Interestingly, according to the interviews, the respondents rarely made themselves think about the reasons for the lack of non-Russians among some of the professional occupations, including senior civil servants positions.

In many cases, trying to explain this situation they referred to the ‘concourse of the circumstances’. At the same time, in a number of the narratives the existence of a sort of ‘unofficial, secret instructions’ was mentioned. These instructions were developed by the ideologists of the Communist Party and consisted of rather clear guidelines not to give an opportunity to the representatives of some nationalities to enter some occupations and senior positions, including administrative civil service jobs:

‘At the moment, I can’t imagine what kind of issues may occur related to the nationality... I remember, in one’s time it was a problem for non-Russian staff, for example, to get through the Regional Communist Party Committee (‘Obkom partii’) and get a job in the Oblast Trade Union Office. If you happened to be a Jew, you would be definitely rejected... The answer would be ‘No’. It didn’t matter how qualified you were. I knew such examples myself. But right now – I can’t imagine any tensions to appear’

(18)

In many, many cases the civil servants made the point that most often it was not their individual intention to consider non-Russian representatives as ‘not suitable’ for appointments within the civil service. Rather, it was an ‘unofficial’ directive from above aimed at limiting the number of ethnic minority members at senior levels.

A very explicit comment on that was made by the respondent from Perm:

‘  
You want to know how I feel about the different nationalities in the civil service in the region. Then, tell me, exactly what nationalities we are talking about’.

(52)

On the basis of the opinions collected from the respondents it can be inferred that the ‘unspoken’ directives from the top management still exist, suggesting to be very choosy and careful in making civil service posts available to ethnic minorities.

Therefore, the *unofficial and ‘unspoken’* but rather clear *directive not to have many ethnic minorities in the civil service* might be highlighted as an additional reason for the shortage of them in this system at present. Although the value of this particular factor nowadays is weakening, it still affects the ethnic breakdown of the civil service staff.

### **The Reluctance of the Minorities**

One of the most widespread opinions among the interviewees concerned the *reluctance and unwillingness of minority members* themselves to become civil servants. Those were mainly the Russian respondents who explained that minority members are not interested in this kind of jobs:

Perhaps, they (minorities - V.A.) are more, sort of, business people. This is my personal view. They set up and run their own businesses and make good money. They are not for the bureaucratic stuff. It seems to me that they don’t want to sit in the office. If they want something – they want the very senior positions, they want something prestigious.

(17)

Closely linked to this opinion were those related to the fact that very few minority members - almost none - apply for the civil service jobs. In short, a lot of the interviewees said that ethnic minorities are not interested in working in the civil service and prefer to be in business. However, as the present study has revealed, there is no hard data collected in the regional civil service proving the above opinions, as there are no statistics which tell how many applicants of different ethnic background applied and have been successful or unsuccessful in their application and for what reason.

But not all participants would agree with the above point. A number of the respondents in both regions declared that some certain ethnic groups and diasporas are rather willing to occupy civil service posts. I will elaborate more on this data in the following chapter.

### **Lack of the Vacancies**

The next group of reasons that prevent ethnic minorities from being employed within the civil service in the both regions is related to the simple *lack of vacancies* along with the *particular difficulty*, which arises sometimes *in finding someone with very specific qualifications* needed. The following citation clarifies this opinion:

‘I doubt that non-Russian might be chosen... We have a very limited number of employees here. There is virtually no staff flow in our Unit. If only some one is going to retire, then we seek for a candidate for replacement. We don’t really have a competition indeed. We just chose some one from our leading specialists.’

(24)

The practice of the selection of a candidate for the vacancy from existing staff or from another department is rather common in the civil service system. If there is no relevant candidate from within the system, the opportunity is used to find someone with the needed qualifications from the ‘inner circle’ of the friends and colleagues from other organizations. At this stage of the selection process a minority member could appear among the candidates, but in most cases just theoretically, rather than in practice. Thus, the so-called ‘word of mouth’ recruitment can potentially produce indirect discrimination. In the particular case of the two regions under investigation, the ‘word of mouth’ recruitment means also that the doors into the civil service has become closed for the potential candidates from the minority groups, because the information about the vacancy is being spread mainly amongst the Russians who occupy the civil service positions already and amongst their friends, who are of the Russian descent for the most part as well.

Just recently I have been selecting a specialist for our department. I have got thirteen applications. The best candidate who had been chosen was from the Tartar nationality. The thing is that the specific of the post required a strong knowledge in environmental law and it was extremely difficult to find a relevant candidate. But that Tartar woman was sort of perfect – very professional and very knowledgeable. I didn’t care of her nationality at all. She has been selected on a merit base according to her capacity’ .

(39)

This narrative presented by the respondent from Perm proves that merit-based competition helps not to miss talents if they are among ethnic minority groups. It is also worth mentioning that the Perm civil servants were on average more likely to express opinions similar to the one above than the respondents from Saratov. They underlined that the larger the sample of the candidates for the post is, the higher the probability of finding the most appropriate candidate is.

The Saratov interviewees on average were less optimistic when assessing their chances to find the best candidate for a vacancy in the civil service among minority members. At the same time they did not entirely reject this possibility.

As it can be seen, for a great number of respondents the lack of minority representatives within the civil service in both regions means just fewer problems to cope with and nothing more. The colour-blind or ethnicity-blind approach to the issue is seen as the best solution

## Reasons of systemic nature

Given that ethnicity or nationality very often appears to be one of the main grounds of discrimination, I expected my respondents to mention it at least a few times as a factor contributing to the shortage of the minority staff in the civil service in the regions. However, the vast majority of the interviewees avoided using this term directly. But when being asked directly about the existence of discrimination on the grounds of nationality some of them believed that it did exist and even gave very specific examples.

‘Discrimination in terms of national origin can be revealed in our region at all the levels of bureaucracy without an exception. In the majority of cases that means hidden discrimination. The main gate for the discrimination is an appointment process. Although officially there is an open competition for the majority of posts within the regional civil service – all those talks about fairness and transparency of that competition is just rubbish. This is just for show. The real candidate either had been already working at this post for a while and this needs just to be officially confirmed through that competition procedure, or he/she has been already approved for the vacancy. Thus all this ‘performance’ with the competition is nothing else but window-dressing, the necessity to show that everything is legal’.

(17)

*An unfair and non-transparent appointment process* is seen as a major reason for discrimination within the civil service. The respondents suggested three main appointment options available. First, in order to be a successful candidate for the post it is necessary to reveal personal loyalty to superiors. The second option involves bribes (or facilitation payment) paid for the desired post. The third and the least likely option is that if there is no candidate who meets one of the two previous requirements someone will be just picked up accidentally. By chance this candidate may be from a national minority group. All three cases may and will include discrimination, as respondents underlined.

The respondents’ opinions on the lack of a fair and professional appointment policy correspond to the results of a nation-wide survey conducted in August 2004 by the Levada-Center<sup>3</sup>. Respondents were asked: “How do you think the new appointees to the state bodies are being selected now...?”:

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<sup>3</sup> Levada-Center (ex-VCIOM-A) is an independent non-profit organization Yuriy Levada Analytical Center, headed by Yuriy Levada – the well known Russian sociologist, the founder and the head of the former All-Russian Center for Public Opinion and Market Research (VCIOM) and later the founder and the head of VCIOM-A . The story behind the creation of VCIOM-A in English can be found at: [http://iicas.org/2003en/02\\_10\\_an\\_en.htm](http://iicas.org/2003en/02_10_an_en.htm)

- 30% said that new appointees are being selected according to their professional qualities;
- 17% were undecided;
- 53% said that new appointees are being selected according to their personal loyalty to the President Vladimir Putin (Levada, 2005).

Unfortunately, corruption also appears to strongly affect competition and the appointment processes within the civil service, as the interviews have revealed.

Thus, actually for the civil servants sharing power in many cases means –sharing ‘extra money’ and ‘extra opportunities’ in allocating resources. My point is that not only the dominant Russian group does not want to give up of some authority. It is more likely that its members do not want to run a risk of granting power and ‘complementary resources’ to those minority groups, which are considered to be unreliable, such as Chechens, and some of the minorities from the Caucasus, for example:

‘Everyone knows how these ‘so-called’ merit based and open competitions are being organized. That is all on paper. But this system assumes as well that if some of the representatives from the X minority group decide that they really need their member in the senior position somewhere, let’s say, in the regional government, they would come with a generous facilitation payment and then, it is rather likely, that this concrete appointment would take place. So, in this case the nationality of the candidate would not be taken into account. The result depends only on the amount on stake’.

(29)

Analysis of some narratives also shows that for the most part neither ethnicity nor nationality itself presents a problem for the minority members to become a senior civil servant. Rather, it is the non-transparent, unfair and very often corrupt system of appointment and personnel management as such within the regions. This poor system affects all the nationality groups; it affects the whole population. Unfortunately, these problems become more visible especially when non-Russian civil servants are involved. The factor of the poor, authoritarian administrative system in Russia, which keeps making the vastly hierarchical bureaucracy and a power elite the only ruling class of the society, was addressed by the respondents as one of the most profound barrier for the inflow of the ethnic minorities into the regional civil service.

### **Lack of trust**

According to senior civil servants’ views, one more serious reason that prevents regional authorities from attracting minority representatives to the civil service is the strong belief that the majority of the population is not likely to trust minority leaders in the civil service and government.

‘However, from the point of view of the electorate, I would say their attitude to the minority representatives being at the top positions in the

civil service is negative. Let's say, if there is some one from the Jewish descent and he is occupying the key position in the government or in the civil service – me, the Russian, would not be happy to be 'under his governance'. Because I have a kind of stereotype (which has been cultivated in my family, among my friends), that such a kind of situation is wrong. There has not been an opportunity for this stereotype to change as life goes on. Even though as an intelligent person I can assure myself that the nationality background is not a big deal, still I have some anxiety about all these non-Russians. I kind of trust them, but only to some extent. But this attitude is never being discussed openly. This is intrinsic motivation which has been rarely declared openly. But this motivation is widely spread among the population'.

(20)

After discussing the problem of the administrative system in Russia, it now can be said that the above narrative includes several factors that are linked to this problem and which have become the reasons for a shortage of ethnic minorities in the regional civil service. One factor is a stereotyping with frequent negative connotations of non-Russian nationalities. The other one is the low level of trust in the authorities in general. In addition to these two factors, the so-called 'mentality inertia' inherent to a rather big part of modern Russia's population still keeps them identifying ethnic minority representatives with a sort of 'alien', problematic nationalities, who need to be distanced from the power structures in Russia. This 'mentality inertia' was the outcome of the great number of collisions and transformations which virtually all the nationalities, especially non-Russian, had undergone during the Soviet times. All these transformation made a significant impact on the mental and intellectual capacity of some generations to think about the 'nationality question' in positive and constructive way (Tishkov, 1997a: 42-8 ).

However, as the respondents themselves have also been exposed to some good examples of the minorities' participation within the civil service most of them assumed that if a transparent and fair selection and appointment procedure would have been used, the non-Russian civil servants could have enriched the civil service institution in the regions:

'While admitting the ethnic minorities into the civil service, we need to keep in mind the fact that at the moment there is almost no trust in the government in the region and in the country as a whole. Therefore, from my point of view, if someone holds necessary skills and knowledge, he or she is welcome to the civil service to improve the governance in the region, and this person will put all efforts in order to work effectively. In this case, it doesn't matter what the one's ethnicity is'.

(21)

Since the majority of the respondents were not in favour of continuing with the unfair selection process, some of them (particularly from the Perm region) were sure that something

should be done in order to protect ethnic minority candidates from discrimination, and the role of the heads of the regions is fundamental here.

In summary, it can be inferred that there are a number of factors which the respondents from Perm and Saratov have considered to be the main reasons for the lack of the ethnic minorities among the senior civil service in the regions in Russia.

Among them the following might be pointed out as most influential:

- the Russians' domination in the regions;
- the reluctance of the minorities to apply for civil service vacancies;
- the lack of vacancies in many departments;
- the 'unofficial' taboo regarding minority members within the senior civil service;
- the lack of trust in minority leaders as a civil servants;
- the non-transparent and unfair selection and appointment process;
- the corruption of the administrative system;
- the traditional 'non-occupation' of civil service posts by minorities.

These reasons could probably be systematized into certain categories depending on what social, administrative, or ideological basis underlies them. I suggest the following categories:

- the reasons depending on the common values and norms of the respondents rooted in the Soviet legacy;
- the reasons depending on the authoritarian administrative system;
- the reasons depending on social disparity;
- the reason depending on the primacy of the ideological purpose of ethnic relations.

Thus, these reasons might be considered to be as social, administrative, or ideological barriers for the potential adoption of multiculturalism in the Russian civil service. In other words, the declared conformity of the civil servants in Russia to the idea of the equality of all the nationalities is not supported by a lot of evidence in real life and actually have turned out to be an obstacle on the road to a 'Russian multiculturalism' in the civil service.

### **Does Multiculturalism Fit the Civil Service in Russia?**

One of the main goals of the current study was to find out, based on the empirical data, whether the civil servants in the regions in Russia were ready to incorporate multiculturalism into the civil service. In order to do that the following approaches have been made . Given that in the Russian context the term 'nationality question' was used instead of 'multiculturalism' and that the respondents generally spoke about different nationalities when addressing the ethnic diversity of the regions, this goal might be considered in the two following ways. First of all it can be suggested that 'to be ready for multiculturalism in the civil service' would have meant to my respondents something close to – would they welcome the idea to have a diverse civil service, based on the principles of multiculturalism, such as equal opportunity, social inclusion, understanding and respect for ethnic diversity. Second, it is possible to assume that their

willingness to adopt multiculturalism could also be based on the long-term outcomes, which they might have expected from a diverse civil service in the regions.

Summing up the views and opinions of the Russian civil servants, it is important to point out what the main outcomes would be, from the respondents' point of view, if the regional civil service happened to be ethnically diverse. All in all they show that ethnic diversity and multiculturalism with its principles nowadays are not likely to fit the civil service in Russia and gain some significant support from the current civil servants. Among the most impressive and sometimes rather controversial results of a possible multicultural civil service in Russia are the following:

- the decrease/increase of the public's trust in the civil service institution and the regional government;
- the increase of negative attitudes and stereotyping towards ethnic minorities;
- the supposition that minority civil servants will carry out a sort of 'ethnic expansion' within the civil service and will flood the civil service institution with members of their own ethnic groups;
- the supposition that the interests of the Russian population will be infringed;
- the supposition that social and ethnic circumstances in the regions will deteriorate;
- the supposition that uncontrolled lobbying of the explicit and implicit interests of the minorities will begin.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations: Assessment of the 'Russian Multiculturalism' Alternatives and Some Strategies to Action**

The number of policy advices could be developed according to the three level model of the civil service as an institution.

#### **Fort the level of a personnel system:**

- to introduce an Assessment Centre technology as a tool for staffing policies within the civil service;
- to attract senior civil servants from different regional government departments to participate in selection committees;
- to monitor the number of applications submitted for the civil service positions, with particular attention to the senior positions, by ethnic minority members;
- for the sake of equal opportunity policy to keep the record of the nationality origin of the civil servants in the regional government;
- to make the training and professional development courses on diversity management obligatory courses in the curricular of the regional Academies for the Civil Service;
- to guarantee open and wide advertising of the vacancies within the civil service in the regions;



- to provide an equal access of the citizens to information about the vacancies within the civil service in the regions, by the means of regional media, ethnic communities and the civil service institution itself.

**For the governance level:**

- to ensure that federal and regional legislation on the civil service is being implemented and is equally treating citizens without discrimination on the ground of ethnicity;
- to establish a regional government body responsible for dealing with ethnic diversity issues in the regions (i.e. Committee on the Inter-Nationalities Relations) with participation of the minority representatives;
- to ensure that ethnic diversity issues are being included in the regional government agenda

**For the performance level:**

- to set up targets in the regional governments to improve minority participation and to change organizational culture by making it more tolerant to minority presence;
- to disseminate 'best practice' experience in terms of ethnic minority representation within the civil service
- to evaluate the efficacy of the regional civil service institutions based on the active participation of ethnic minorities
- to develop and teach professional development courses on diversity management in Russia

One of the fundamental findings of the present study is that at the moment the civil service in Russia is not ready to adopt multiculturalism in its norms, practices and values.

At the same time, this has given us the evidence, that the civil servants in the regions in Russia are not satisfied with the principles the appointment process is built on and with the practice of exploiting the painful and complicated 'nationality question' just as an effective ad-hoc tool in the pre-election period. A deep understanding and great concern upon the lack of the relevant ideology and policy which would make all the people regardless of their nationality and ethnicity feeling equally valued and recognized within society, has been articulated in the majority of the interviews with the civil servants in the Perm and Saratov regions.

This finding makes us think that some strategy could be suggested in order to make changes in the existing approaches to the solution of the 'nationality question' in the civil service and in the Russian society as a whole and therefore to make the adoption of the kind of the 'Russian multiculturalism more feasible.

Among the main aims of this strategy, the following positions could be mentioned. First, it would seek to prepare the multinational population of the Russian Federation to think about the spectrum of the existing nationalities, including the Russian majority, and about the state response to ethnic diversity, in a way quite different from the primordial, and assimilationist approach of 'soviet internationalism'. This kind of enlightenment stage of the strategy proposed

seems to be the most important and time-consuming, as any change in the way of thinking usually takes a lot of time and has to be incremental. However, in this particular case of the adoption of multiculturalism in the Russian civil service, the process of educating the civil servants about ethnic diversity and multiculturalism could not be skipped, as the vacuum in their heads and minds on the issue of the ‘nationality question’ resolution within the civil service and in Russia as a whole has to be filled up. The fact that the national strategy in the field of inter-ethnic relations and the nationality policy has been missing in the country since the beginning of the 1990s makes it clear that neither federal, nor regional governments have yet tried to create a workable policy in order to accommodate ethnic diversity within the civil service system. Thus, an enlightenment and education, which is promoting the main principles of multiculturalism, such as social justice, equal opportunity and respect for all the nationalities would be the first step of the strategy proposed in democratic Russia. Evidently, it would call for the working out of new courses in the universities curricular, which would build diversity awareness among the civil servant and develop their professional and personal diversity competence.

After the first step of the strategy is fulfilled and the attitudes of the civil servants to ethnic minorities and the ‘nationality question’ is changed in direction to valuing of and respect for ethnic diversity, the next step might be taken with regard to the second aim of the strategy suggested. This aim assumes that the strategy would seek to adjust the policy of multiculturalism to the Russian context, in order to make it more suitable for the Russian circumstances and more functional.

Even though the data of the study explains that multiculturalism can not be invented directly as an option of nationality policy, the same empirical data provides us with the evidence that after some corrections it still may be helpful for initiating and developing the ‘Russian multiculturalism’ within the civil service in the regions . Based on the evidence from the present research, it is possible to suggest the introduction of the ‘Russian multiculturalism’ as a policy, which will stand for acknowledgment of *variations* rather than *diversity of cultures*. These *variations* are familiar to the current population from the past Soviet times, when they were celebrating the friendship and flourishing of the fifteen Soviet republics with their titular nationalities. At first glance, the *variations of cultures* do not underline their differences, but seek to describe their variety and richness. Second, the belief that all cultural segments merit equal value used to be also rather well known even only from the declared soviet ideology of the ‘united soviet nation’. Hence, the belief that all *cultural variations* can be presented on the fair competitive basis within the regional civil service may also become one of the main points of multiculturalism in Russia. Third, the ‘Russian multiculturalism’ should be seen as open to

further development and flexible policy, rather than a fixed one, similar to the dogmatic ideal of the ‘internationalism’ of the Soviet times. As the pure ideological component is replaced in multiculturalism with the business and moral rationale, therefore, it would arguably work out for all *cultural variations* presented in the regions – for the Russians, for ethnic minorities residing in the regions for a long time, as well as for newcomers, as economic migrants from the republics of the former USSR. Trying to meet the needs of majority and minority groups alike, the ‘Russian multiculturalism’ requires to call for adjustment of the claims and aspirations from both ethnic minority and Russian majority. However, all the potential adjustments have to be done in conformity with the main principles of multiculturalism.

Another alteration multiculturalism would arguably undergo to become more relevant for the Russian case, would include the change of the main foundation for the principle of social inclusion. The generally declared civil rights for all the citizens of Russia regardless of one’s nationality and ethnic origin, and the prohibition of the discrimination stated in the Constitution of the Russian Federation and in a number of the federal acts, have been widely violated and thus could not be considered as the main rationale of the social inclusion of all the nationalities in the society’s life in Russia. As the present study has shown, it is more likely that in the case of Russia the existence of a number of similar unresolved issues of social and economic nature could serve as a basis for social inclusion, because the vast majority of the respondents have seen the need to overcome these problems together as the uniting factor for all the nationalities in the country.

One more correction has to be made in order to adjust multiculturalism to the Russian context. As the interviews have observed, the civil servants from Russia are not in favour of implementing affirmative actions and quotas as the attempts to resolve the ‘nationality question’. As the Soviet and the Russian history testifies, the issue of power sharing and equal participation in decision making has always been the main stumbling-block for the more broad representation of ethnic minorities within the civil service and the government. Thus, the principle of equal opportunity in the Russian context would arguably mean first of all equal opportunity for all the nationalities to enter the senior civil service positions and to equally participate in decision making.

This principle would probably appear to be one of the most controversial for the civil servants and hard to agree with. But at the same time, based on the finding of this study, for the non-Russian nationalities it would mean not only gaining access to resources. It would also mean that if they equally participate in decision making, they would also share the responsibility for the outcomes of the decisions made. From the one hand, according to the conventional wisdom

the presence of a greater number of the minority representatives would probably make an impression that the Russian ruling majority is getting weaker. But if the power sharing and fair representation of the minorities in the civil service and in the regional government has been the result of social inclusion and a transparent appointment process, based on the principle of equal opportunity for all the citizens, then it is more likely that Russians and non-Russians would try to find the best solution to the issues they face together without blaming each other for the selfish motivation and aggressive lobbying. On the other hand, being fairly appointed, according to the professional and educational characteristics, ethnic minority civil servant would arguably strengthen the confidence in the regional government and in the civil service as social and political institution.

All the alterations to the policy of multiculturalism described above justify the preventive nature of the 'Russian multiculturalism', which might be based on the modified principles of respect for the variations of cultures, equal opportunity and social inclusion. Therefore, the Russian kind of multiculturalism can be recognized as an 'introductory policy', aiming to prepare civil servants and the population in the region to understand, recognize, value, respect and manage the variations of cultures. This policy may be seen as a transition from the 'internationalism' to some new national policy, which has yet to be worked out. Being a proactive, rather than a reactive policy, the 'Russian multiculturalism' would serve as the mitigating factor in dealing with the sensitive and still scary for the majority of the civil servants the 'nationality question' in Russia. This proactive character of the 'Russian multiculturalism' is exactly the specific feature, which makes it different from rather reactive multiculturalisms from abroad.

As one more important specific feature of the Russian approach to multiculturalism the following aspect has to be mentioned based on the evidence given in the interviews. In order to be adopted appropriately as a policy within the civil service, multiculturalism first has to be stabilized and fixed in the Russian society as its descriptive characteristics, and next it has to be developed and accepted as an ideology and norms to live with. These three different concepts of multiculturalism if being realized one after another would make it possible for the 'Russian multiculturalism' to appear as a successful and appropriate policy not only within the civil service, but within society as a whole.

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