

Having the opportunity to prove yourself - Gentiana Hasani

I am Gentianë Hasani. I come from Obiliq and I am 32 years old. My bachelor studies were in Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, while for my master's I did Archival Studies.

I grew up in a family of seven members, my parents and five sisters. I am the second of the sisters. I never felt discriminated against in a negative way, but instead sometimes positively, because they did not help me when I didn't need it. I was never made to feel like, "don't let Gentë do it, because she can't," but I was allowed to make my own choices. This was the trust that they showed me since the beginning.

Normally, support was always present, it wasn't something to feel bad about. I have had freedom in everything, not only in living, meaning just existing, but the right to talk, make decisions, express thoughts, everything that a normal kid does at home, that kids usually do, I have done it without any problem.

My parents and my sisters have been the greatest help with this, especially my father.

He studied abroad and worked at an enterprise in Kosovo, and maybe he gained a mentality that should be considered something normal, not something extraordinary. But it is extraordinary at the moment you think about, but after that it becomes a routine, and you get used to it, you realize that it is something that you have to live with [the disability], and they gave me the feeling that... You have to go, and learn, and have a good job, to achieve something. I have always had this support at home.

I had good times during elementary school, high school and my university studies. My friends were always good to me, always supportive. I was never left out of activities, only when they wanted to make some process easier for me. For example, physical education and sports were problematic.

Running, for example, is something I've never done, because I can't and my professor didn't allow me. But other subjects that included learning were never a problem to me.

Maybe not intentionally, but with good intentions, a friend of mine told me about a situation with a teacher, you know the time when you are to be graded on a subject, and normally I was always prepared...

A friend of mine told me... as I was at a doctor's appointment after that class, other students who had not come prepared were told by the teacher "how come you came unprepared and

with all the conditions that she has, she came prepared,” and this makes you positively discriminated against.

I know that her intention was good, because I know that she is a good professor. But the saddest part is that they don't expect us to have a certain level of ability and then they positively discriminate against you without being aware that someone can be hurt.

And then throughout my university studies, I had a good time. During my university studies my physical condition made it a little difficult for me. I had some medical operations during my studies, rest and then another operation, and then again rest.

After completing my bachelor's studies I had to undergo an operation, and then another one, and then during my master's, I had to change my thesis.

After my operations my aesthetic condition was fixed, but that strength... my body still hasn't gained that strength again. And my master's thesis required fieldwork, required work "on the ground"... and I didn't finish that thesis because I didn't want to deal with fieldwork; it was more difficult, and so I chose a different topic that had more desk research.

After finishing my bachelor's studies in Ethnology I was lucky, I saw the application contest for a master's in Archival Studies. I knew that archives deal with documentation and that is something that I like. And I had dealt with documents before, so it suited me and my physical conditions as well, and was something I really liked. Luckily I got accepted in the first term. I was the first generation.

My work experiences usually were just internships. My first internship was back in 2008, at the Employment Office at Obiliq's Municipality. It was organized by the UNDP, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and the Office for Social Welfare in Obiliq. I had a two month internship there.

My job was registering citizens that came to look for work and their academic level. For the two months I worked there, the same work that other employees did, I did too. I never had a disagreement or misunderstanding that made me feel bad or anything. I had a very good time.

During my studies I mainly had internships that were required for my studies. We had one at the Kosovo State Archives' Agency where we also learned, we did internships, and then also I did a three month internship.

All of these were without pay. One internship we had to do was at the State Archive, while the other, at Prishtina's Archive, which was something I wanted to finish, to gain experience, and maybe help me in the future to get employed. I worked there for three months. I did the same work as any other employees there. We did classification, elimination, fixing, material processing, archiving documents that were there.

Now, my first experience that counts as work, was here at Handikos, for four months I was a project manager.

I had a good time with my colleagues here, with Lirije and others, because we understand each other better than others understand us.

Usually, for the internships that I have finished, I have had documentation and certification issued to me afterwards, and usually, I present all the documentation in each application.

Most of the time, they rarely call me for an interview. I can't be that sure that it is because of my disabilities, since the application process does not require you to state whether you have disabilities, or come from marginalized communities, but the job call encourages anyone to apply.

At the end of each job call, everyone is encouraged to fill in the application and you aren't required to fill in and say that you have a disability, I don't believe it's the reason I haven't been called for interviews, maybe I was just unlucky.

I search for work any time I see a job vacancy, even without finishing my studies. Mainly in administration, which is something more suitable for me, it doesn't require too much physical commitment so I usually look there.

The first internship job that I finished didn't have a contract. In fact I signed it but it was a contract with conditions. It included the conditions that the institution that financed the project, my work was paid for two months, it was 200 euros the payment for two months in that project. The conditions were that if something happens to me during the work, accident or something, the donor doesn't take responsibility for my recovery or other issues.

Other internships, the faculty internships at archives, were without payment. It was a two week internship that each of the students were obligated to finish, so I earned the certificate with the signature of the archive director. At Prishtina's Archive there was an internship that I was required personally to finish, to gain more work experience in the archive that in the near future to be more prepared for work. It was without payment as well.

Another internship that I forgot to mention was at Obiliq, the Municipality of Obiliq, where I worked in the archives for two weeks. Two weeks for each two years, 2011-2012, and later again.

It was a project within the Directorate for Human Rights and Gender Equality and there I was paid 50-60 euros for those days, for two weeks.

From all the internship jobs that I did until now, only at the Office for Social Work at the Obiliq's Municipality, I was given a work contract... a contract for those two months I did there.

What I would really love, from the state, but others, and from society in general, is that when they open a job vacancy and when they say to include all the people... They should take into account that people with disabilities, the first thing that they cannot access is physical access. For example I can use the stairs, and elevator, but stairs are a bit of a problem for me.

For a wheelchair user it is difficult to use the elevator alone, so you need to have more safety, and to not even mention the stairs and that it is unreasonable to have someone to take you to the second floor for example, in order to finish some work that you might have.

Firstly, they need to secure physical access and then the inside work environments need to be more suitable because not all disabled people have the same ability to finish the work in the best way possible if the job conditions are not that good.

From the institutions I would require them to give us the opportunity to be employed, at least to give us the opportunity to finish internships, and then to consider if we are suitable for that position or not. Because it is a direct prejudice if you do not accept someone because of the disability, and they see it as something because of mercy.

We are not seeking sympathy, all that we want is to enjoy our rights as individuals, not as a person with disability of any kind.

As well as society, I would like that society, for the new generations, and institutions, to take this into account...

Because disability is not something tragic, but it is a condition that is hard to accept in the beginning, especially those that gain it over time, if not at birth but gain it later at time, if they acquire acute physical disabilities.

We should research, learn and understand everyone's condition, and then talk or have prejudgments or something.



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